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FACTORS AFFECTING JOINT COOPERATION  
DURING THE CIVIL WAR

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

TIMOTHY R. HANLEY, LCDR, USN  
B.S., U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis Maryland, 1978

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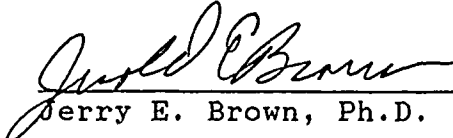
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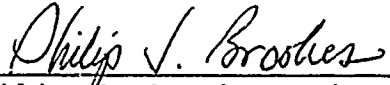
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## ABSTRACT

FACTORS AFFECTING JOINT COOPERATION DURING THE CIVIL WAR by  
LCDR Timothy R. Hanley, USN, 135 pages.

This study is a historical analysis of selected joint Army - Navy operations conducted along the East Coast during the American Civil War. It begins with a description of the ante-bellum conditions of the Army and Navy and the organizational structure of the War and Navy Departments. Three joint operations are analyzed; the Fort Sumter Relief Expedition of 1861, the Port Royal Expedition of 1862, and the Charleston Campaign of 1863.

In none of the joint operations covered by this study was there a unified command structure between the Army and Navy. Mutual support between the services was dependent upon voluntary cooperation between the respective service commanders.

This study determines what factors influenced the degree of cooperation between the service commanders of joint operations during the Civil War. Many of the factors which either facilitated or hindered joint cooperation during that time could affect contemporary joint operations, particularly in the early stages before a unified command structure is established. An appreciation of those factors is both helpful in understanding the outcome of Civil War joint operations as well as providing some insight into the problems faced by contemporary commanders in a joint environment.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This paper will investigate those factors which affected cooperation between the Army and Navy during the Civil War. The primary research question which served as the focus of this paper was: Was the success or failure of joint operations primarily dependent upon the personalities of the local army and navy commanders involved?

Since the organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the early 1940's, an increasing amount of effort has been expended in improving the efficiency of joint operations. The formation of the Department of Defense, the establishment of the Joint Staff, and even more recently the Goldwater-Nichols Act, have all been designed to reduce the competition and conflict between the armed services.

Since joint operations have received so much attention for so long, it is worthwhile to investigate joint operations from a period before formal procedures and requirements were in place to help ensure cooperation



between the services. Such an investigation may illuminate those factors which tended to either help or hinder the successful completion of joint operations.

An understanding of those factors may aid in improving joint cooperation now and in the future. Factors which are normally present in joint operations and which tend to facilitate cooperation can be fostered and encouraged. Those factors which are usually hindering to cooperation can be reduced, if not altogether eliminated. This may prove to be important in the early stages of some future developing military situation or crisis where on-scene units from different services must work together before a formalized command structure is established.

The American Civil War offers an excellent example of American joint operations in an age lacking any institutional or traditional emphasis on cooperation between the services. The wide scope of operations, the varying conditions under which they were conducted, and most importantly, the variety of commanders involved, make it a fertile ground for research in this topic.

In order to conduct an investigation of sufficient depth while keeping the length of this paper within reasonable limits, it focuses on the following three joint operations:

1. The Fort Sumter Relief Expedition of 1861.

2. The siezure of Port Royal Sound and associated operations in South Carolina and Georgia, 1861-62.

3. The campaign against Charleston, 1862-63.

Limiting this study to these three campaigns had several advantages. All of the campaigns were conducted in the same theater of operations; the East Coast. The period covered by the these operations encompassed a large portion of the war, thereby allowing factors such as technological advances and experience to be assessed.

Operations along the Gulf Coast were not addressed because of the limited duration of those joint operations after their initial objectives had been seized. Joint operations along the Western Rivers, although extensive, also were not addressed due to the degree of subordination between the services. The subordination of the Navy to the Army was formal early in the war. Although the Navy later became an independent command, the nature of riverine operations continued to foster a degree of subordination of the Navy to the Army. Such subordination may have masked or precluded problems in cooperation that surfaced in other operations where the services were on a more equal footing.

Several terms need to be defined as they are used in this paper and some of its source quotations:

(1) Successful operation: A joint operation in which Army-Navy cooperation was a factor in achieving the objective of the operation or one in which, although the

objective was not achieved, it was not due to any significant failure of Army-Navy cooperation.

(2) Joint operation: An operation involving both Army and Navy forces. Some sources also refer to Combined Operations, with the same definition.

(3) Military operation: An operation involving primarily or exclusively Army forces, or an operation under Army control. This 19th century convention is frequent in documents from that time.

(4) Naval operation: An operation involving primarily or exclusively Navy forces, or an operation under Navy control.

(5) East Coast: The Civil War theater of operations stretching from the coastal waters of Virginia to the Florida Keys, to include tidal estuaries, bays, and navigable rivers.

A search of both primary and secondary source material on the Civil War indicates that the subject of intraservice cooperation during Civil War joint operations has not been directly addressed. There are numerous histories available covering joint operations, most of which are histories of the Navy's involvement in the war. The one work which comes closest to addressing this topic is Rowena Reed's Combined Operations in the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> Reed's book suffers from a lack of objectivity as well as a tendency to jump to conclusions which are not supported by

facts. Her judgemental manner and frequently frivolous tone make her analysis of joint operations suspect and of little real value.

Chapter Two will begin with a description of the pre-war, or antebellum, conditions of the Army and Navy to identify those institutional factors which were carried forward into the war and which affected the conduct of joint operations either in the early operations, or throughout the course of the war.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Rowena Reed, Combined Operations in the Civil War  
(Annapolis:Naval Institute Press, 1978)

## CHAPTER TWO

### ANTEBELLUM CONDITIONS AND THE FORT SUMTER EXPEDITION

The Army and Navy of 1861 were vastly different than those which emerged from the war just four years later. The intensity, duration, and scope of the war was without precedent for either service. Although the war forced revolutionary and lasting changes on the services and their leaders, their pre-war attitudes, prejudices, traditions, and procedures continued to influence their conduct throughout it.

The services shared several similarities before the war. Both were small and almost inconsequential by the standards of even a year later. They were both officered by professionals, men who had no hope of promotion except through the glacially slow process of filling vacancies by seniority as older officers died or retired. The slow pace of promotions, combined with an inadequate pension system, resulted in a superannuated officer corps in both services. Men who would today be regarded as well beyond the age of

vigorous service were commonplace among the senior positions of the antebellum military.<sup>1</sup>

Politics played a prominent and pervasive role in the services. Officers usually gained their commissions thru political influence and were accustomed to seeking political relief for career setbacks. Suspicion of change was characteristic of the senior leaders of both services. When this orthodoxy was combined with an aversion to risk taking and its attendant responsibility, the frequent result was paralysis in planning and operations.

The War Department itself slumbered in an easy placidity ... Its eight dominant bureaus were bound up in red tape and made practically senile by sheer age; of the officers who commanded these bureaus, all but one had been in service since the War of 1812, and several had held their posts for decades, happily contributing to the lethargic routine which slowed all activities down to a crawl.<sup>2</sup>

By custom rather than law, the operational control of the Army was in the hands of the senior general of the army, Lieutenant General Winfield S. Scott, who had been in the position for decades. The office of Commanding General, or General in Chief, was not statutory, the incumbent's authority derived from his seniority.<sup>3</sup>

Insofar as the organization of the headquarters of the army was influenced by any principle at all, it derived from ideas belatedly inspired by France, which separated command and administration. The bureau heads reported to the secretary of war rather than to the general in chief of the army, making complete, formal separation between control of military operations and control of the necessary quartermaster, ordnance, and other logistical elements needed to support operations. The post of general in chief was not established in law and

evolved by retaining on duty in Washington the senior general officer of the army. Without statutory authority, the general in chief struggled, usually in vain, to establish his control over the army and the bureau chiefs.<sup>4</sup>

Matters of command and precedence were also sources of both confusion and friction. Field commands were subject to unplanned changes as the arrival of an officer senior to the designated commander would automatically result in his being superseded in command. This situation resulted in an unusual degree of sensitivity concerning relative rank among senior officers.<sup>5</sup>

The radical changes which the U.S. Army had to undergo in reaction to the war can be better appreciated when taken in context of the small size of the Army at the war's outbreak:

... the entire United States Army at that moment (1860) numbered hardly more than 16,000 officers and men, and these were scattered all over the continental United States, guarding the frontiers, protecting emigrant trains, overawing contumacious Indians, and in general trying to do a very large job with inadequate means ... In plain fact, the United States was all but disarmed. It possessed 198 companies of regulars, and it had 183 of these on the frontier or in the empty West.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. Army at the start of the Civil War was little more than a frontier constabulary force, with all of the petty problems associated with small peacetime armies in a democracy. It was neither organized nor prepared to wage a major war across half of the continent. It would prove to be an institution which learned quickly, but the sheer



volume of the learning task ahead of it would affect its operations until almost the end of the war.

The Navy was also poorly organized to fight a major war. As was the case with the Army, various bureau chiefs held enormous power and were not subject to the orders of the Secretary of the Navy on the particulars of their administration. The Navy had no equivalent of the Army's General in Chief. The senior officer in the Navy had no authority outside of whatever billet he happened to be filling. What planning that was needed was accomplished by the Secretary who gave operational orders directly to the commanders of the various squadrons.<sup>7</sup>

At the war's start the Navy had only eighty-nine vessels, of which only forty-two were in commission and of those all but four were serving on foreign cruising stations.<sup>8</sup> The Navy's manpower was only 7600, less than half the size of the small army. The small size of the force amplified the officer corps' obsession with rank and precedence and severely limited the opportunities for senior officers to gain experience in commanding multi-ship formations.<sup>9</sup>

A major strength of the Navy was its professional officer corps. Unlike the Army, the Navy's senior positions would continue throughout the war to be filled by professional vice volunteer officers. This was due to a smaller requirement for growth in the Navy officer

corps than the Army faced due to the huge expansion of the Army. Naval officers also required extensive training in seamanship in order to be effective, limiting the pool of potential officer recruits to the merchant marine service. Additionally, in those comparatively romantic days the prospect of extended service on blockade duty did not offer the same opportunity for glory which Army service did. The Navy department records indicate that political appointments were limited to primarily commissions in auxiliary branches such as chaplains and paymasters.

The only significant experience any living officers had in joint operations were those conducted during the Mexican War. Those operations, although successful, were generally small, involving just one or two ships and a few troops. The Navy's role was limited to that of providing transportation, it was never called on to assist the Army in conducting an opposed landing. The most complex and successful joint operation of the Mexican War was the landing of General Scott's expedition at Veracruz in 1847. Although well-planned and executed it too was unopposed and provided few lessons, or at least few that were remembered, to the early commanders in the Civil War.<sup>10</sup>

The possibilities for cooperation between the services were complicated by the personalities and interrelationships between President Lincoln and several of his key Cabinet members. Lincoln's first Secretary of War

was Simon Cameron. The task of rapidly expanding, training, and equipping a huge new army was beyond the limited capabilities of Cameron. From his first days in office he proved to be weak, incompetent, and incapable of controlling corruption. He had had little influence in the cabinet and his advice or opinion on operational matters was ignored by virtually everyone. On January 20, 1862 Lincoln forced him to resign and replaced him with Edwin P. Stanton.<sup>11</sup>

Stanton brought to the War Department everything Cameron lacked - executive ability of a high order, much driving energy, a hound-dog's nose for tracking down irregularities and a furious insistence on removing them when they had been found. He was rude, dictatorial, abusive, a man who could be outrageously blunt and incomprehensibly devious at the same time.<sup>12</sup>

Stanton's abrasive personality was to play a part in Army-Navy cooperation during periods when the Army was not actively engaged in major campaigns and Stanton could pay more attention to quarreling with his colleagues in the Cabinet. By everyone's account, Stanton was an extremely difficult man to work with or for. Despite his many faults and his early contempt for Lincoln, Stanton had one quality which made him invaluable to Lincoln. He was motivated by a burning desire to prosecute the war aggressively and shared Lincoln's impatience with inaction. Any Navy-initiated plan for a joint operation could expect to find support in the War Department as long as it was meant to hurt the enemy.<sup>13</sup>

The Secretary of the Navy differed considerably in temperament from either Cameron or Stanton. Gideon Welles was a former newspaper editor whose only prior experience with the Navy had been as its chief of the Bureau of Provisions and Clothing from 1848-49. He had a reputation for resisting political pressure and avoided intrigue or the other political posturing common to many of his Cabinet colleagues. Although he proved to be sensitive about what he considered to be a lack of public recognition of the Navy's contribution to the war effort, Welles was remarkably free from political ambition and did not seek publicity or fame.<sup>15</sup>

The Secretary of the Navy had almost total control over the operations of the Navy. The absence of any naval officer designated to oversee operations and the lack of any kind of staff left the Secretary with the responsibility for initiating and executing all operational decisions, and all but the most routine administrative ones.

Although dedicated, energetic, and competent, the tremendous demands of enlarging the Navy and directing its many and varied missions could have overtaxed even Welles' considerable talents. Lincoln's appointment of Gustavus V. Fox, a former Navy officer, to the post of chief clerk at the Navy Department in May 1861, and his subsequent promotion to the newly-created office of Assistant

Secretary of the Navy in July of that year was to have many beneficial results for the Navy during the war.<sup>16</sup> His prior service experience made him a trusted source of advice for Welles and his initiative and aggressiveness were to play a key role in the formulation and execution of naval planning.

The lack of even a rudimentary joint staff organization meant that, outside of communications between local commanders, most communications and coordination between the Army and Navy were conducted at the departmental level, normally between the two service secretaries themselves. In that situation the personal relationship between those two men would prove to have a significant effect on joint cooperation. That relationship was anything but cordial.

Although Welles and Cameron served together in the Cabinet for almost ten months, there was little friction between them. Welles considered Cameron incompetent and kept his dealings with him to a minimum. For his part, Cameron seemed too overwhelmed with his job to engage in turf battles with Welles or any one else and his influence on joint operations was negligible. Stanton's appointment as Secretary of War was to be a different matter.

Welles took an instant dislike to Stanton. Although he respected Stanton's "zeal and great labor" in the performance of his duties, he considered him to be

"incompetent, vindictive, dishonest, and disloyal to the President."<sup>17</sup> As Welles stated in the narrative to his published diaries:

Mr. Stanton was fond of power and of its exercise. It was more precious to him than pecuniary gain, to dominate over his fellow. He took pleasure in being ungracious and rough towards those who were under his control, and when he thought his bearish manner would terrify or humiliate those who were subject to him. To his superiors or those who were his equals in position, and who neither heeded nor cared for his violence, he was complacent, sometimes obsequious. From long association and close observation I am convinced he had but little moral courage nor much self-reliance when in trouble.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Stanton - Welles relationship would eventually improve to one of mutual professional respect, there was never any real trust, let alone "cordial intimacy."<sup>19</sup> With two such strong personalities, competition was probably inevitable. Welles stated that the subject of service roles and subordination soon became an issue:

When Mr. Stanton came into the War Department, for several months he assumed that the Navy was secondary and subject to the control and direction of the military branch of the Government. These pretensions, which had agitated each branch of the service, I never recognized, but stated that we were equal and would be ready at all times to cooperate with the armies in any demonstration, but it must not be under orders. If a movement originated in Washington, I claimed, if the Navy was to participate, I must be cognizant of it; if an expedition was undertaken by any general who needed the aid of the Navy, the admiral or senior naval officer on the station must be consulted and cooperation asked. Stanton claimed that, instead of consulting and asking, the military could order naval assistance, and that it was the duty of the Secretary of the Navy and of naval officers to

render it. President Lincoln would not, however, lend himself to this view of the subject.<sup>20</sup>

As can be seen from the above, the resistance to subordinating one service to the other, even for brief periods, was not due to professional jealousy on the part of the commanders involved, it was the stated policy of their civilian masters at the service department level.

The rivalry, competition, and confrontations which arose between the Departments throughout the course of the war were not the responsibility of any one individual. They were the inevitable results of a military command structure which neither demanded nor encouraged cooperation between the services, or for that matter between the bureaus within each service.

Although cabinet level relations were to contribute to the tone of Army - Navy relations, there was also another influence from an even higher level; the leadership style of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief presents a compelling picture of a man struggling to bring military inertia to bear on the task of reuniting the country by force. Lacking any experience in strategy or military planning, Lincoln was willing to defer to the judgement of his military advisers so long as they recognized the need for action. Throughout the war Lincoln was to demonstrate far more patience with failure of an attempt than with reluctance to act.<sup>21</sup>

Lincoln's impatience with inaction or failure to recognize what he thought were opportunities to strike would be evident throughout the war. He was more likely to relieve a commander who he felt was too cautious or slow than one who was incompetent but aggressive. He didn't hesitate to bypass the chain of command to obtain information and sometimes even to give orders without the knowledge of the service secretaries of senior commanders.

His only previous military experience having been as a militia officer in the Black Hawk Indian war of 1838, Lincoln was unprepared to direct the operations of the Army and Navy in a major war. Aware of his lack of knowledge, Lincoln was reduced to studying military texts to try to improve his grasp of strategy and tactics.<sup>22</sup> A succession of poor or unlucky army commanders, particularly in the Army of the Potomac, meant that Lincoln, by necessity, developed into a fairly good strategist during the course of the war. His grasp of strategy was based on a realization of the need to maintain continuous pressure on the Confederacy, using all the means at the Union's disposal, including the ability to use joint operations against the Confederacy's coastline.<sup>23</sup>

As rudimentary as Lincoln's initial understanding of military operations and strategy was, it was far greater than his experience in, or knowledge of, naval doctrine or strategy. His involvement in naval operations would prove



to be far more limited than his military involvement. The major reason for this was the relative importance between the roles of the two services. The Civil War was predominantly a land war, one in which the role of the Navy was primarily to support the Army. The scale and importance of Army operations were deserving of a far greater share of the President's attention than the naval component of the war could ever be.<sup>24</sup>

Another reason for the limited nature of Lincoln's involvement in naval affairs was his trust in the abilities of Gideon Welles. This trust is confirmed by Welles in his diary:

I have administered the Navy Department almost entirely independent of Cabinet consultation, and I may say almost without direction of the President, who not only gives me his confidence but intrusts all naval matters to me.<sup>25</sup>

This unusual degree of freedom would not help foster a spirit of interservice cooperation within the leadership of the Navy. At no time during the war would the Department be under any significant Presidential pressure to work aggressively to support the Army in its efforts.

The first requirement for joint cooperation was placed on the Army and Navy before the war had even begun; the need to resupply and reenforce the besieged garrison of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. After South Carolina's adoption of the Ordinance of Secession on December 20, 1860, the tension between the state and the federal

government over the status of the Charleston Harbor forts continued to build. The federal defenses consisted of four forts: Moultrie, Johnston, Castle Pickney, and Sumter. The small Federal garrison of seventy-four men was concentrated at Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island with the other forts in caretaker status. The location and antiquated design of Fort Moultrie made it indefensible against a landward attack. On the night of December 26, 1860, the garrison commander, Major Robert Anderson, moved his small garrison to the partially completed Fort Sumter.<sup>26</sup>

Sumter was by far the most defensible of the forts, situated on a man-made island in the center of the harbor entrance. It was able to effectively close the harbor if so ordered. Its greatest drawback was its dependence on outside sources for resupply of food, water, and ammunition. The War Department was acutely aware of the need to resupply Sumter and so within a week of its occupation hastily planed to send provisions and more troops to the garrison.<sup>27</sup>

At the direction of President Buchanan, the powerful steam sloop, *USS Brooklyn*, was detailed by the Navy on December 31st to carry 200 regular troops from Fort Monroe to the aid of the fort. Just prior to *Brooklyn's* sailing General Scott had second thoughts about the wisdom of sending a warship and convinced the President that an unarmed civilian steamer would attract less attention, be

less provocative, and have a better chance of reaching the fort undetected. Buchanan followed this advice and the steamer *Star of the West* was dispatched from New York on January 5th, 1861, with 250 green recruits and stores.<sup>28</sup>

As was to be the case for many operations throughout the war, the details of the plans were a poorly kept secret and soon made their way into newspapers across the South. The South Carolina forces were expecting the *Star of the West's* arrival and, when she made her appearance off Charleston early in the morning of January 8th, she was easily driven off by the cannon fire of the secessionist works. So ended the first, and only, attempt of the Buchanan administration to relieve Sumter.<sup>29</sup>

The decision of whether to abandon Sumter or attempt to relieve it by force was left to the incoming Lincoln Administration. Within a week of his March 4th inauguration, Lincoln took up the issue. Turning first to his general in chief, Lincoln found no support for risking a confrontation. Apparently discouraged by the failure of the *Star of the West* expedition the previous January, Scott advised the President to:

Conjure back the seceded states by any concessions which will induce their return, but if all your offers and your promises will not entice them, then, in the last resort, you must let them go. Wayward sisters, go in peace.<sup>30</sup>

Unsatisfied with this passive approach, Lincoln turned to his Cabinet. Here too he met with pessimism.

Secretary of War Cameron recommended abandoning the fort, and Secretary Welles "saw no reason to impeach the conclusions of the military." Lincoln's most vocal support for decisive action came from an unlikely source, his Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair.<sup>31</sup>

Blair was so committed to making an attempt to relieve Sumter that he threatened to resign unless an attempt was made. Blair was confident that the best means of resupplying the fort was a plan devised by his brother-in-law, a former naval officer turned businessman named Gustavus V. Fox. Fox's plan involved the use of a civilian steamer to transport the troops and supplies, several small gunboats to drive off any Confederate guard boats, and a large naval vessel to supply small boats and their crews. Fox envisioned using the small boats to transfer the reinforcements and supplies to the fort under cover of darkness. Even if the attempt was discovered he felt that Confederate guns in the batteries surrounding Sumter would not be able to destroy more than a few of the boats.<sup>32</sup>

Postmaster Blair arranged for Fox to present his plan to the President, Lincoln then directed Fox to discuss his plan with General Scott. The General remained convinced that Sumter's situation was hopeless and that, although Fox's plan might have worked even a month earlier, the continued improvement of the Confederate defenses made it impractical. Meeting to discuss the plan with Cameron and

Welles, Scott stated: "The question was.... one for naval authorities to decide for the Army could do nothing."<sup>33</sup>

Informed of Scott's continued lack of enthusiasm for the operation, Lincoln told Fox to find "any officer of high rank in Washington who would sustain (him) in his project," directing that if one could be found he should be brought to the White House. Fox was able to convince the Navy's senior officer, Commodore Stringham, of his plan's feasibility and then took him to see the President. Satisfied with Stringham's endorsement, Lincoln told Fox to start making preparations for the expedition. Typical of many of the superannuated officers who filled the top ranks of both services, Stringham's approval of an idea was tempered with caution that he not be associated with it in the event of failure. Stringham refused Welles' request that he command the relief expedition because "he considered it too late to be successful and likely to ruin the reputation of the officer who undertook it."<sup>34</sup>

With the decision made to attempt the resupply of Sumter the organization of the expedition was worked out. The War Department would locate and charter whatever transportation was needed for its troops and supplies with the Navy remaining aloof from all details except those directly pertaining to the actions and responsibilities of the naval vessels assigned to the expedition. The Army transports would be under the command of Mr. Fox. In this

case we have the peculiar situation of a civilian, a former Navy officer, Gustavus Fox, searching ports for suitable vessels, never contacting the Navy to see if it could be of any assistance. For its part the Navy's leadership did not seem to be concerned about the divided nature of the afloat command. Indeed, one gets the impression reviewing the correspondence of the principal participants of this, and similar operations, that the Navy neither knew, nor cared where the Army got its transports or what it did with them.

Acting under orders from the Secretary of War, Fox took charge of the military side of the expedition, chartered the steamer *Baltic*, obtained the necessary provisions and, after loading the troops, he sailed under written instructions from Cameron which reflected Lincoln's latest modification to the plan. If the Confederates did not attempt to interfere with the resupply of the fort then only provisions would be landed. In the event of resistance then the troops would also be landed:

If you are opposed in this you are directed to report the fact to the Senior Naval officer off the harbor, who will be instructed by the Secretary of the Navy to use his entire force to open a passage, when you will, if possible, effect a passage and place both troops and supplies in Fort Sumter.<sup>35</sup>

The orders to Fox, the nominal expedition commander, did not make it clear that he was to have any sort of authority over the naval vessels assigned to support the expedition.

Gideon Welles ordered all of the available naval vessels to join the expedition. Only three were available;

the screw sloop *USS Pawnee* at Washington, the screw sloop *USS Pocahontas* at Norfolk, and the Revenue Cutter *Harriet Lane* at New York. Shortly thereafter he added the largest ship available, the sidewheel steamer *USS Powhatan*, which had just returned the day before from duty off the coast of Mexico.<sup>36</sup>

The selection of the commander of the naval portion of the expedition was simple; it fell to the most senior officer of the four ship captains involved: Captain Samuel Mercer of the *Powhatan*. Mercer's orders from Secretary Welles for the expedition read, in part:

The United States Steamers *Powhatan*, *Pawnee*, *Pocahontas*, and *Harriet Lane* will compose a naval force under your command, to be sent to the vicinity of Charleston, S.C., for the purpose of aiding in carrying out the objects of an expedition of which the War Department has charge.

The primary object of the expedition is to provision Fort Sumter, for which purpose the War Department will furnish the necessary transports. Should the authorities of Charleston permit the fort to be supplied, no further particular service will be required of the force under your command .

Should the authorities at Charleston, however, refuse to permit, or attempt to prevent the vessel or vessels having supplies on board from entering the harbor, or from peaceably proceeding to Fort Sumter, you will protect the transports or boats of the expedition in the object of their mission, disposing of your force in such manner as to open the way for their ingress, and afford as far as practicable security to the men and boats, and repelling by force if necessary all obstructions toward provisioning the fort and reinforcing it; for in case of resistance to the peaceable primary object of the expedition, a reinforcement of the garrison will also be attempted. These purposes will be under the supervision of the War

Department, which has charge of the expedition. The expedition has been intrusted to Captain G.V. Fox, with whom you will put yourself in communication, and cooperate with him to accomplish and carry into effect its object.<sup>37</sup>

The sealed orders given to the other ship captains merely told them to rendezvous off Charleston with Captain Mercer on April 11th for further orders.<sup>38</sup>

Whether or not Fox's resupply plan would have worked and, if so, what if any its impact on history would have been, is now a moot point for the expedition was wrecked in a farcical episode involving the President, Secretary of State, and two presumptuous junior officers. Secretary of State Seward was convinced that Fort Sumter was doomed. The government, he felt, should focus its efforts on relieving another garrison that was in a similar condition to Fort Sumter's. Faced with the same problem, the commander of the garrison at Pensacola, Florida, Lt. Adam J. Slemmer, took basically the same action as Maj. Anderson in Charleston, he withdrew his small garrison to the most defensible of the three forts at his disposal. The fort he selected was Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island, commanding the entrance to Pensacola Harbor and the Navy Yard it contained.<sup>39</sup>

The situation of Pickens differed from Sumter in three important respects. It controlled access to the only Navy Yard located in any of the states which had succeeded up to that time, Florida did not have the close association with secession which South Carolina had, and most



importantly, the location of the fort allowed it to be reenforced by sea at will. The Confederate forces could bombard the fort but they could not control the approaches to it, as was the case with Fort Sumter.<sup>40</sup>

Seward found support for his position that the situation at Fort Pickens deserved the full attention of the government from Capt. Montgomery C. Meigs, an engineer officer assigned to the War Department, and Meigs' friend Lt. David D. Porter of the Navy.<sup>41</sup> Both officers believed that a warship carrying troops should be sent to reenforce Pickens as soon as possible. Seward sent the officers to see Lincoln, who agreed with their plan and their assessment that both the War and Navy Departments were riddled with Southern sympathizers who would alert the Confederates to the planned expedition. Lincoln agreed to sign orders to give Porter and Meigs authority to organize an expedition in such a manner that it would be kept secret from Cameron, Welles, the service departments, and all officers not directly involved with the plan.<sup>42</sup>

Porter's orders, which he drafted himself for the President's signature, gave him a degree of latitude and authority which officers far senior to him may never have dreamed of:

Executive Mansion  
April 1st, 1861

Lieut. D.D. Porter, U.S.NAVY:

Sir: You will proceed to New York and with the least possible delay assume command of any naval

steamer available. Proceed to Pensacola Harbor, and at any cost or risk prevent any expedition from the mainland reaching Fort Pickens or Santa Rosa.

You will exhibit this order to any naval officer at Pensacola if you deem it necessary after you have established yourself within the harbor, and will request co-operation by the entrance of at least one other vessel.

This order, its object, and your destination will be communicated to no person whatever until you reach the Harbor of Pensacola.

Abraham Lincoln<sup>43</sup>

Thus the first joint operation of the war began with a lack of coordination between the services and a striking example of Presidential interference in both operational matters and the military chain of command.

The ship which Porter selected for his expedition was *Powhatan*, the key ship of the Sumter Relief Expedition. Alerted by the President's secretary to the unusual circumstances surrounding the Pickens expedition, Welles convinced the President to countermand his orders to Porter and Miegs. Ignoring a recall telegram from Seward, Porter took command of *Powhatan* and sailed for Pensacola on the 6th of April.<sup>44</sup>

The loss of *Powhatan* from the Sumter expedition was a fatal blow to its chances for success. After arriving off of Charleston on April 12th, Fox met up with *Pawnee* and *Harriet Lane*. Unaware that the *Powhatan* had been removed from the expedition, he decided to attempt to resupply Sumter immediately. Fox found that the Navy ship commanders refused to assist him, feeling bound by their

orders to report to Capt. Mercer of *Powhatan*. The expedition spent the remainder of the day awaiting the arrival of Mercer, unaware that the Confederate bombardment of Sumter had begun early that morning. Upon closing the fort that evening, Fox discovered the attack in progress. Deciding that an attempt to relieve the fort while it was under fire was hopeless without the firepower of *Powhatan*, Fox continued to await her arrival. On the morning of April 14th he saw that Sumter had surrendered.<sup>45</sup>

The first mission of the war assigned to the Army and Navy, the relief of Fort Sumter, had ended in failure. Although the fort's garrison had been under seige for over four months by the time of its surrender there was no real attempt at contingency planning. Some allowance must be made for the unprecedented circumstances and unique pressures of a crisis involving the potential for civil war but nonetheless both services had proven themselves to be wholly unprepared for the demands of war.

The confusion surrounding the second relief expedition did have some beneficial effects. Lincoln claimed he had signed Meigs' and Porter's orders without reviewing them carefully and would not have approved them if he known of the conflict with the Sumter Expedition. In the future Lincoln would prove to be more sensitive about observing the chain of command, at least as far as the Navy was concerned. Even though he would, on occasion, give

orders directly to Army field officers he never again approved of any plan that would deliberately involve keeping information from the service secretaries. The incident also embarrassed Seward, who could not escape responsibility for interference in the military departments' affairs. His influence over future joint operations would be minimal. As Welles stated, the affair helped to "define the province of the different departments of the Government under President Lincoln."<sup>46</sup>

The fall of Fort Sumter, for which both services bore responsibility, changed their operating environment from one of crisis to war. The problems which the crisis had highlighted would continue to affect joint operations as the war started. Lack of coordination and planning, a narrow view of responsibility, and a reluctance by senior officers to assume responsibility would be all too familiar in the years ahead. The reliance on seniority was slowly and unevenly superseded by merit as the basis for promotion and selection for command. As revolutionary as the Civil War was for the American military, the habits, attitudes, and structure with which it began the war would continue to exert a powerful influence on it throughout its course.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Rowena Reed, Combined Operations in the Civil War (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), xiii.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce Catton, The Coming Fury (New York: Washington Square Press, 1961), 122

<sup>3</sup>Reed, xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won (Urbana, Ill:Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983), 105.

<sup>5</sup>Reed, xiii.

<sup>6</sup>Catton, Coming Fury, 121.

<sup>7</sup>Reed, xiii.

<sup>8</sup>Virgil C. Jones, "The Navies Begin" in The Image of War, ed. William C. Davis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), 219.

<sup>9</sup>David D. Porter, The Naval History of the Civil War (New York: Sherman Publishing Co.: 1889), 37.

<sup>10</sup>Reed, xii.

<sup>11</sup>Hattaway, How the North Won, 90.

<sup>12</sup>Bruce Catton, Terrible Swift Sword (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 133-34.

<sup>13</sup>Hattaway, 91-92.

<sup>14</sup>Richard S. West, Mr. Lincoln's Navy (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1957), 15.

<sup>15</sup>Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Gideon Welles, vol.1, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1960), xvii-xviii.

<sup>16</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 50.

<sup>17</sup>Beale, Diary of Welles, vol. 1, xvii-xviii.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, 67-68.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>21</sup>Bruce Catton, "Mr. Lincoln's Army" in Bruce Catton's Civil War (New York; Fairfax Press, 1984), 119.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>23</sup>Hattaway, How the North Won, 57,81.

<sup>24</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 15.

<sup>25</sup>Beale, Diary of Welles, vol. 1, 134.

<sup>26</sup>Catton, Coming Fury, 142,154-56.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 178-82.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 178-82.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 178-82.

<sup>30</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 17.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>33</sup>Porter, Naval History, 96, and a5 Beale, Diary of Welles, vol.1, 4.

<sup>34</sup>Porter, Naval History, 97.

<sup>35</sup>Robert M. Thompson and Richard Wainwright, eds., The Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox (New York: Naval Historical Society, 1918), 21.

<sup>36</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 19.

<sup>37</sup>Beale, Diary of Welles, vol. 1, 22.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>39</sup>Catton, Coming Fury, 274-78.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 274-78.

<sup>41</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 21.

<sup>42</sup>Porter, Naval History, 101.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>44</sup>Beale, Diary of Welles, 27.

<sup>45</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 26.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 25.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PORT ROYAL EXPEDITION

The failure of the Federal forces to relieve Fort Sumter had been the result of several weaknesses including poor or non-existent planning, a reluctance by both services to take aggressive action and its attendant responsibility, and a lack of appreciation for the advantages of uncontested seapower held by the Union forces. While the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the Fort Sumter failure can be understood - and even excused as common to many first engagements - these failings and others would continue to resurface in joint operations until almost the last operation of the war.

The bombardment and surrender of Sumter had brought to a head the crisis which most civilian and military leaders, both North and South, had been either consciously trying to avoid, or subconsciously trying to ignore: war. Faced with the apparently inevitable necessity of restoring the union by force, the Federal military now had to decide just how to go about it. As has been the case with every



American war, the military strategy and decisions would reflect, and be constrained by, the political goals and imperatives of the day.

The strategic situation at the time of Sumter's fall posed an enormous challenge for the Union. The Confederacy controlled virtually all the territory south of Missouri, Tennessee, and Maryland, and from Texas to Virginia. The only areas still under Federal control were at Fort Monroe, Virginia, and several small footholds on the coast of Florida at Key West and Fort Pickens. The modest industrial capacity of the South was, like its population, spread fairly evenly across its territory, making it difficult to identify any "strategic" points whose capture would hasten victory.

The first strategy to earn serious consideration in the North was proposed by the general in chief, Gen. Winfield S. Scott. Scott's plan consisted of two main points; using the Union's control of the sea to blockade the Confederate coastline, and mounting a large joint expedition to seize the Mississippi River valley, dividing the eastern portion of the Confederacy from Texas and its long border with Mexico. The surrounding of the Confederacy and the strangulation of its war industries inherent in the blockade portion of the plan led to its becoming known as the "Anaconda Plan".<sup>1</sup>

Time would prove that the Anaconda plan was militarily sound, indeed it was essentially the framework for the ultimate Union victory. Despite its military soundness the plan failed to recognize the political demands of the war. Propaganda, short 90-day enlistments, ignorance of the realities of war, and public expectations combined to place tremendous pressure on the Lincoln administration to fight and end the war quickly, very quickly. The proposed Mississippi expedition required a large body of trained troops, approximately 80,000, and could not possibly be organized before November, 1861, a politically unacceptable delay.<sup>2</sup>

The War Department, under political pressure, abandoned the Anaconda Plan and prepared for an early, and hopefully decisive, march on the Confederate capitol at Richmond. Although discarded as a formal policy, the Anaconda Plan would continue to live on in the impetus it gave to the establishment of a blockade of the Confederate coast. On April 17th, 1861, a naval blockade was declared by the Federal Government along the coastline from South Carolina to Texas. Following the secession of Virginia and North Carolina on April 27th, the Federals extended the blockade to cover their coasts as well.<sup>3</sup>

The task of enforcing the blockade was formidable. The Southern coastline stretched for over 3500 miles and included more than 180 navigable harbors and inlets. The

requirements imposed by international law made the maintenance of a blockade even more difficult. In order to be considered legal, thereby allowing the lawful seizure of vessels attempting to run it, the blockade had to be first formally announced to each individual foreign government with any trading interest in the affected areas. If, for any reason, a continuous naval presence off of a port of entry could not be maintained, then the blockade was considered to be "raised" at that harbour and could not be reestablished until the formal notification procedure had been repeated. In an age of slow, shipborne communications the delay involved in even a temporary break in the blockade could be significant.<sup>4</sup> Vessels caught running the blockade anywhere else on the coast except at designated "ports of entry" were subject to seizure at anytime since they could be declared as smugglers.<sup>5</sup>

Maintenance of the blockade would require enormous effort for the Navy as late as 1865, by which time most major ports and large sections of the Southern coastline were under Federal control. To the comparatively tiny Navy of 1861, the many problems associated with enforcing a blockade would appear to be all but insurmountable.

The handful of ships at the Navy's disposal were for the most part worthless for blockade duty. The old sail-powered ships could not possibly hope to run down and capture a steamer. Dependent on the wind, there would be

many times when they would be becalmed or when strong onshore winds forced them to move far out to sea to avoid being blown ashore. The relatively few number of steam-powered warships available were too large to even enter many southern harbors, a handicap which some would later claim was the result of deliberate planning on the part of some Southern congressmen involved in naval appropriations in the pre-war years.<sup>6</sup>

For those ships which could enter the dredged harbors of the South, their usefulness for blockade duty was still limited. For almost its entire length, the Southern coastline was protected by low-lying off-shore islands which masked inland sounds and bays. These inshore waters were usually connected by an intricate web of rivers, creeks, and bayous. To make the blockade truly effective, to choke off the import of desperately needed war supplies to the Confederacy, the Navy would have to operate not just offshore but in and among the innumerable waterways of the coastal areas. To conduct those operations the Navy had neither the quantity or type of ships needed, nor, more surprisingly, any but the most rudimentary knowledge of the Southern coast of their own country.

At the outbreak of the war Lincoln's Navy Department knew a great deal about the geography of the coast of Mexico, scene of operations for the so-called Home Squadron. The western seaboard of Africa was familiar, for the United States maintained a squadron off Africa to enforce the antislave-trade treaty. The image of the Mediterranean, thanks to service in the

Mediterranean Squadron, was etched on every American naval officer's mind, but the character of the coast line of the Southern states and its implications for the Federal Blockade were imperfectly understood.<sup>7</sup>

The legal requirement to maintain a continuous blockade outside Southern harbours posed an especially difficult problem. Steam propulsion for ships was a relatively new technology, one that stretched the design and manufacturing capabilities of the day to their utmost. Mechanical breakdowns were common, and frequently beyond the capabilities of the crews to repair them underway. If repair facilities were not located close to the blockaded ports then the time required for ships to return to distant bases for repair would require a very large number of ships assigned to each port, in order to ensure that at least one or two would always be available.

Yet another problem was that the small, shallow-draft ships needed for inshore blockade duty were not capable of riding out storms except in protected anchorages. Federal-controlled anchorages or harbors would be needed near the major blockaded ports to provide storm refuge as well as repair and resupply facilities.

Although normally thought of as a purely naval mission, the establishment and maintenance of a blockade was evidently going to require the seizure and defense of coastal areas along the Confederate coastline. The U.S. Marine Corps of the 1860's was extremely small and its missions limited to guarding naval shipyards and providing

small detachments on warships, more as concession to tradition than for any practical purpose. If the Navy wanted bases established in enemy territory then the support, and cooperation, of the Army would be needed.

The problem of too few ships of the type needed for blockade duty would be overcome in fairly short order. A large number of small civilian light-draft steamers and ferryboats was purchased in the months after the announcement of the blockade. The problem of how to establish an effective blockade would take a little more thought.

The impetus to investigate and plan on how to establish the blockade came from a civilian outside of the Navy Department. Professor Alexander D. Bache, Superintendent of the U.S. Coast Survey, made the recommendation that a board or committee be established to collect the available hydrographic, topographic, and military information concerning the coast.<sup>8</sup> Secretary Welles quickly accepted Bache's recommendation and on June 28th, 1861, established a temporary board, known since as the Bache Board.<sup>9</sup>

The board was composed of Captain Samuel F. DuPont, one of the navy's more senior officers (also the grandson of the founder of the DuPont gunpowder fortune), and who had blockade experience in the Mexican War; Major John G. Barnard of the Army Corps of Engineers, an expert on

coastal defenses; Prof. Bache; and Commander Charles P. Davis, USN. DuPont was the president of the board and Davis the secretary.<sup>10</sup> The board was charged with selecting suitable locations for coaling stations, one on the East Coast and one on the Gulf Coast. Despite attempts at secrecy, the composition and purpose of the board was reported in northern newspapers within two weeks of its establishment.<sup>11</sup>

In a series of reports made to Secretary Welles in the summer of 1861, the Bache Board recommended that one of four possible locations be seized for the purpose of establishing a coaling station and base for the blockading vessels. In order of preference the four locations were: Fernandina, Florida; Bull's Bay, South Carolina; St Helena Bay, South Carolina; and Port Royal, South Carolina.<sup>12</sup> The board also recommended that the responsibility of maintaining the blockade be divided between two squadrons: the North Atlantic Blockading squadron being responsible for the coastal waters from Maryland to North Carolina; and the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron having responsibility for the coast from South Carolina to the tip of Florida.<sup>13</sup>

The first joint amphibious operation of the war was not a result of the Bache Board's recommendations, or any other effort to define and carry out a strategy to win the war. Its concept was the product of an unlikely military

figure who would continue to play a prominent role in several joint operations in almost every theater of the war: Major General Benjamin F. Butler.

A prominent and influential Massachusetts politician, Butler's power and entrance into the Lincoln Administration were his impeccable credentials as a "War Democrat", whose support the Republican administration deemed essential to maintaining the war effort. He was rewarded for his loyalty with a major general's commission at the outbreak of the war, the first such appointment made, thereby making him the senior Major General in the Army. Not surprisingly, Butler quickly proved, and then reconfirmed at frequent intervals throughout the war, that he was a much better politician than soldier. His importance to Lincoln would rescue him from his failures until almost the end of the war.

Designated to command the Federal forces in and around Ft. Monroe, Virginia, Butler initiated, and then promptly lost, the first "battle" of the war at Big Bethel on June 10th, 1861. His small force was poorly handled and was eventually routed by a much smaller Confederate force. Although small and indecisive, the fact that Big Bethel was the first fight, and that Federal forces had been humiliated in it, was to give it a greater importance than it would otherwise deserve.<sup>14</sup>



Embarrassed by the nation-wide criticism of his failure at Big Bethel, Butler looked for an opportunity to salvage his reputation.<sup>15</sup> He found it when he received reports that the Confederates were fortifying Hatteras Inlet on the North Carolina coast. The inlet was a dual threat. It was a haven for privateers and its connection to Aberlmarle Sound made it a convenient point for blockade runners to gain access to Norfolk. Within two weeks of his defeat at Big Bethel, Butler sent the Secretary of War a memorandum recommending that a small expedition be sent to the inlet to "break it up."<sup>16</sup> In early August, both the War and Navy Departments accepted Butler's recommendation. Butler was named as the military commander of the expedition and ordered to cooperate with the naval commander, Flag Officer Silas Stringham.

The expedition's objective was limited - not the last time that a joint expedition would be dispatched without much thought or planning being given to its potential exploitation. The commanders were instructed to drive the enemy from their fortifications and then sink stone-laden vessels in the channel leading into Hatteras Inlet, thereby making it unavailable for use by privateers. Since it was a military maxim that "ships cannot fight forts," the mission of the troops would be to land and then attack and seize the forts with the support of the warships.<sup>17</sup>

There was little in the way of planning or coordination conducted between the joint commanders. This can be partially excused in light of what little information they had to work with. The location of Hatteras Inlet itself was not certain since the Navy's charts and the Army's maps did not even show it.<sup>18</sup> The expedition sailed from Hampton Roads on August 26th, 1861, and arrived off the inlet the next afternoon. At 10:00 A.M. the next morning, the warships began shelling the two forts guarding the inlet. Both Forts Hatteras and Clark were poorly designed, built, and armed. Their garrisons were undermanned and almost untrained. Shortly after the bombardment began an attempt was made to land the troops but the rough surf conditions, normal to that area, forced a halt after only 350 men out of 860 had been landed. No water, provisions or ammunition made it ashore and the soldiers were soaked from floundering ashore through the surf.<sup>19</sup>

The gunnery duel between the fleet and the forts was very one-sided in favor of the ships. The short range of most of the shore batteries and the inexperience of their gunners was a poor match to the powerful, modern armament of the naval ships and the expertise of their crews, virtually all of whom were prewar professionals. After less than three hours of shelling, the garrison of Fort Clark abandoned their fort and fled to Fort Hatteras.

The Federal troops, now stranded ashore due to the increasing surf, entered Fort Clark later that night.<sup>20</sup>

The approach of nightfall and the increasing threat of a storm forced the fleet to break off its attack on Fort Hatteras and the fleet, with General Butler, withdrew seaward for the night, leaving the troops ashore without support. Fortunately for the Federals the Confederates were in disarray and made no attempt to capture them. Returning to the fight the next morning, the fleet resumed its shelling of Fort Hatteras which surrendered before noon. Since the Federal troops had not taken an active role against either fort, the Confederate commander refused to surrender to Butler, stating that it had been the naval gunfire that had forced his capitulation. A compromise was worked out and the surrender was made to Butler aboard Stringham's flagship.<sup>21</sup>

After capturing the forts, Butler and Stringham consulted and decided to make a major departure from their orders. They decided not to sink the "stone fleet" and then abandon the area but rather to permanently garrison the inlet. Their rationale was that the constantly shifting nature of the channel would soon make the obstructions ineffective and that Federal control of the inlet would provide a base for both blockaders and forces operating on the extensive North Carolina sounds.<sup>22</sup>

Each eager to claim full credit for the expedition's success for himself, both Butler and Stringham left their commands on the day of the surrender and raced to Washington and hoped-for glory. While the North generally - and Lincoln in particular - were thrilled by the success, the so-called "footrace" to Washington by the commanders led to extensive speculation in the press that there was bad blood between the services.<sup>23</sup>

After achieving such an unexpected success, the commanders made no attempt to exploit it. The whole of Pamlico Sound and the inner coastline of North Carolina was undefended. The Confederates moved quickly to fortify the inner coast. It would take another, larger expedition and almost another year to gain control of the North Carolina sounds.<sup>24</sup>

The Port Royal expedition marked an important departure in the criteria for selection of commanders. Bypassing eighteen more senior officers for the command of the naval portion of the expedition, Secretary Welles for the first time selected an officer, DuPont, based not on his seniority but on his qualifications. It would become common place for the Secretary to solve problems of seniority by summarily retiring senior officers whom he felt were inefficient, thereby bring more junior, but more qualified, officers to the top.<sup>25</sup> As president of the Bache Board, DuPont was intimately familiar with the need to

establish coaling stations. The board's recommendations did not completely reflect his own opinions. He felt that "Port Royal was by far the best location" but the Navy Department, while favoring Fernandina at the outset, finally left the selection to his discretion.<sup>26</sup>

On September 18th Welles named DuPont as commander of the newly-created South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, with his area of responsibility extending from South Carolina to the southern tip of Florida.<sup>27</sup> This appointment was in addition to his designation as the commander of the naval portion of the Port Royal Expedition. The appointment was effectively a promotion for DuPont, since he was designated as a "Flag Officer," a temporary grade whose poorly defined status was resolved on October 18th, 1861 by a Presidential order making Navy Flag Officers equivalent in rank to Army Major Generals.<sup>28</sup>

The rationale behind the selection of the military commander of the expedition is not so clear. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Sherman (no relation to the more famous W.T. Sherman) was an artilleryman of long service but no particular distinction. Except for a brief interruption to lead a battery in the battle of Bull Run, his wartime service was limited to working on the defenses of Washington. His selection to lead the military portion of the expedition resulted in his appointment as a Brigadier-General of Volunteers.<sup>29</sup>

The personal relationship between the two commanders would influence the entire operation. DuPont's extensive personal correspondence gives us some insight in how the relationship developed during the months of preparations and delays:

-- July 26th letter to his wife "...the general or colonel commanding was to be named today. Sherman of Sherman's battery is spoken of. I hear he is a very superior military man, ... but I learn he is ugly-tempered and morose - bad, this, for a naval cooperation where the two branches are so apt to come in collision."<sup>30</sup>

-- July 28th letter to his wife "Sherman is not a demonstrative man and did not impress me favorably, nor can I believe he is the right man."<sup>31</sup>

-- September 8th letter to his wife "I had a long visit this afternoon from G.S.{Gen Sherman}-he grows upon you, inasmuch as everything he says indicates a man of principle and, I believe, a religious man. This is very good - he wants some amenity and graciousness, but his manners are good. He is also and evidently a thorough officer and understands what he is about and what is before him."<sup>32</sup>

-- October 26th letter to his wife "Sherman comes up more and more as a military man and seems free from jealousy or feelings of rivalry."<sup>33</sup>

-- November 2nd journal entry "The General bears up well--he is evidently one of those tempers who chafe under small disappointments but rise to big ones. . ."<sup>34</sup>

Sherman leaves the impression of being a dedicated, hard-working, and aggressive (compared to his contemporaries), but not particularly ambitious, sensitive, or intellectual. All in all, he was an ideal choice to work with the vastly more ambitious, reflective, and somewhat more competent DuPont. Neither man was

notably competitive in nature, but DuPont was very sensitive concerning matters of rank and prerogative. His sensitivity on these matters was enough to gain him a reputation even in the exceptionally honor-conscious American military of the mid-1800's.

The wording of DuPont's instructions from the Secretary of the Navy (see Appendix One) gave him the discretion to choose the destination of the expedition. While encouraged to consult with his Army counterpart, it is an important point. DuPont felt that his instructions gave him "supreme authority,"<sup>35</sup> which was important to DuPont. The fact that he felt secure in his supremacy made it easier for him to act graciously toward Sherman and avoid making a point over precedence.

Interservice competition and friction were concerns of both the Administration and the senior officers involved in the expedition. President Lincoln, concerned over the press attention given to the apparent competition for credit between the joint commanders of the Hatteras Expedition, gave clear instructions, through the service secretaries, to both commanders that complete interservice cooperation was expected and that anything less would not be tolerated. As can be seen from the texts of those instructions, (see Appendices One and Two), the wording of these points is almost identical.<sup>36</sup>

Both Sherman and DuPont appeared to have understood the importance of maintaining harmonious relations between the Army and Navy and would work to suppress any friction throughout their relationship. Their efforts would include both setting personal examples and also demanding that their subordinate commanders support the same goal. They were successful to a point but some friction and misunderstanding was inevitable, particularly since this was the first joint venture by any of the participants. Even after the primary objective of the expedition had been achieved and the services had been working together for several months, it would require constant effort to avoid a breakdown of cooperation, as discussed in a letter of December 11th, 1861 From Navy Captain Charles H. Davis, commander of DuPont's flagship, to his wife:

We gave a very pleasant dinner the other day to the generals, all but Sherman, who was sick. We endeavor to preserve the most harmonious relations with the officers of the Army, regulars and volunteers, and have thus far succeeded. But I am surprised to see how many disturbing influences are in operation to endanger the harmony between the two services. It requires a great deal of good sense, which is another word for Christian charity, to avoid petty contentions between subordinates.<sup>37</sup>

The allocation of forces to the expedition was constrained by two primary factors, the Navy's need to provide ships to the blockade, and the Army's reluctance to divert troops from the Army of the Potomac. The source of resistance in the Army was not the Secretary of War or the general in chief, Winfield Scott, it came from the newly



proclaimed "Young Napoleon," Major-General George S. McClellan, the commander of the Army of the Potomac.

McClellan's opinion of joint operations against the coast was simple: anything which did not directly support the Army of the Potomac was irrelevant and even a dangerous diversion from what he considered to be his greatly outnumbered army. When McClellan replaced Scott as general in chief of the Union armies, on the day of the sailing of the Port Royal Expedition, he would grudgingly support actions designed to strengthen the blockade but would prove to be a stifling influence on attempts to exploit the gains made by joint amphibious expeditions.<sup>38</sup>

Despite McClellan's protests, the importance of the expedition to the administration and the Navy is evident from its very size. With fifteen warships, and thirty-five Army-controlled transports and supply vessels it was the largest naval force ever assembled in U.S. history to that date.<sup>39</sup> The transports carried 12,000 mostly raw troops, a battalion of 600 Marines, and a few Regular Army artillerymen. The intention of using Port Royal as a coaling station was evident in the inclusion of twenty-five schooners loaded with coal.<sup>40</sup>

The size and composition of this force were considered adequate for the limited mission assigned to it; to attack and seize a suitable harbor and then fortify and garrison it against any enemy attempt to reclaim it. The

troops were allocated virtually no means of land transportation, such as wagons or horses, or any small boats to allow them to move around the inland waters independent of the Navy. This oversight would prove to be crippling to any attempts to move inland to exploit their gains on the Confederate coast.<sup>41</sup>

The orders given to the expedition commanders are striking in the degree of latitude which they granted them. They were granted the authority to choose their destination. Given the scanty information available about the actual hydrographic conditions of the possible destinations, this was probably a wise decision, but it also led to a very relaxed approach toward planning the assault. Originally the plan called for dividing the force into two groups: one for Bull's Bay, and the other for Fernandina. It was not until the day before the expedition sailed that Port Royal was chosen as the destination for the entire expedition.<sup>42</sup>

The orders, as separate from instructions, given the commanders by their respective service secretaries were the soul of brevity. Shermans's orders of August 2nd:

You will proceed to New York immediately and organize, in connection with Captain DuPont, of the Navy, an expedition of 12,000 men. Its destination you and the naval commander will determine after you have sailed. You should sail at the earliest possible moment.<sup>43</sup>

Whatever else that may be said, the military commander's freedom of action certainly was not constrained by detailed

and complex orders. Dupont's orders from Welles were almost as short.<sup>44</sup>

After the decision was made in early August to form a joint expedition to establish naval bases on the southern coast and the commanders chosen, these commanders, particularly General Sherman, had a formidable task ahead of them in preparing for it. The time available for those preparations ended up being considerably more than originally envisioned. Although the Port Royal Expedition was supposed to have sailed shortly after the Hatteras Expedition, it was repeatedly postponed by the War Department. General Scott was reluctant to let Sherman's troops leave the Washington area in the face of repeated rumors of large Confederate forces threatening the capitol.<sup>45</sup>

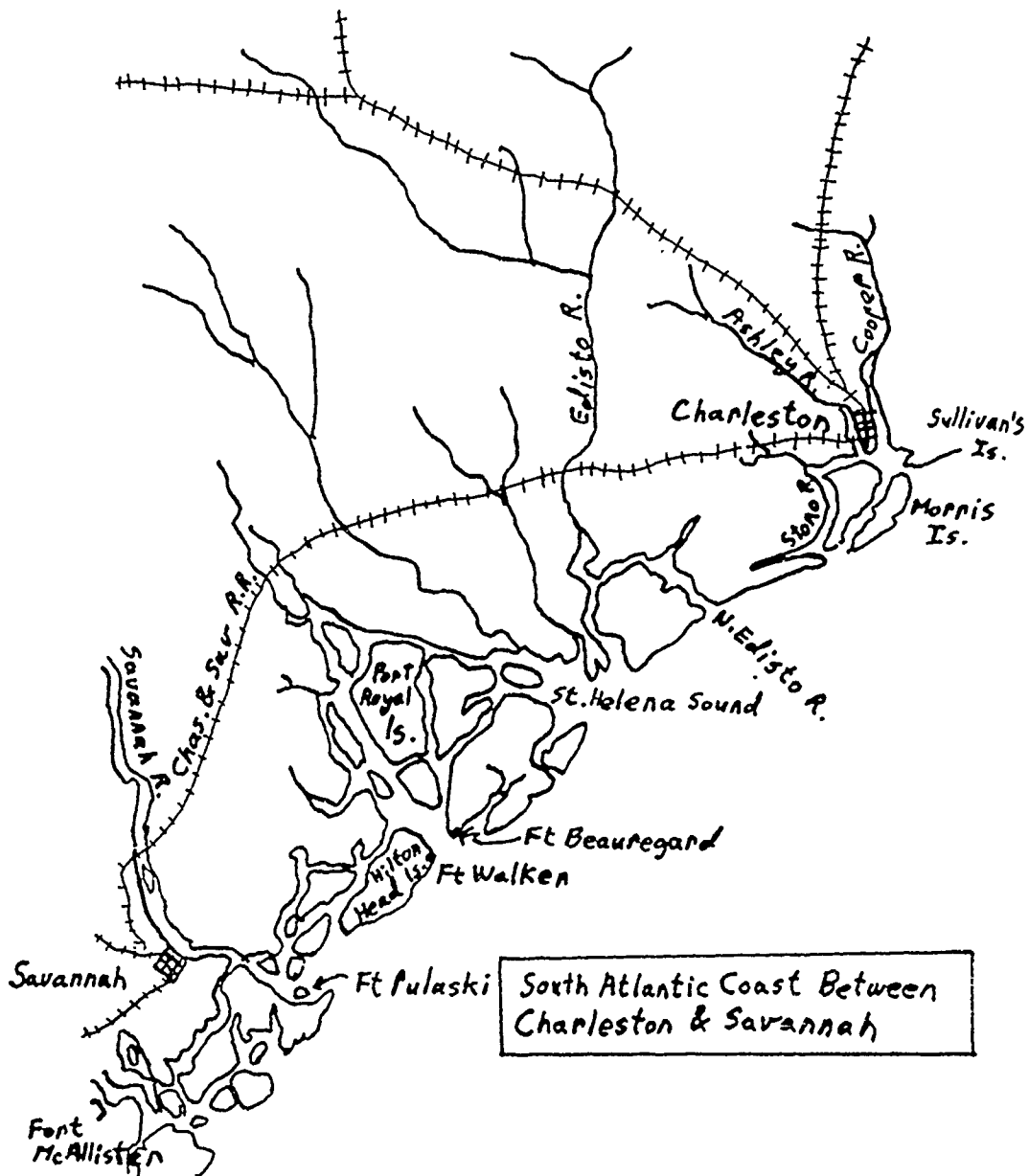
Both Sherman and DuPont carried on with their preparations, if not planning. Most of Sherman's time was spent in recruiting, outfitting, and trying to train his new force. Since most of his force already existed, DuPont was free to spend more effort focusing on the needs of an amphibious expedition. DuPont had requested a friend at the Navy Department, who had access to the records of the Mexican War amphibious operations, to review them and advise him as to what type of boat was best suited for the landing of troops.<sup>46</sup> His other preparations included getting Coast Survey personnel and ships to install navigation aids

in the channel and arranging for pilots to guide the ships and surfmen to operate the landing boats.<sup>47</sup>

During this preparation period, DuPont's thinking on the relative roles of the Army and Navy had undergone a change. He became convinced that not only could the Navy seize shore forts by itself, it could do so in a more efficient and safe manner than the Army. In a letter to his wife on October 17th, he explained this line of thought:

...the original conception was that of a *joint* (DuPont's italics) expedition. At Port Royal the soldiers will have nothing to do --they are obliterated--though we did work out a distant landing for them when we investigated the subject; whether Sherman will agree to be a looker-on is another element. I am supreme in the decision, it is true, but it might be very unwise so to act. If we can take, we *hold*. With soldiers it would be very doubtful, for great forces could be brought to bear upon them-- upon us only forts, which we would not allow them to put up.<sup>48</sup>

Fortunately for the sake of interservice cooperation, DuPont was discrete in choosing to whom he voiced his opinions on the relative importance of the services in joint operations. The rather informal attitude of the Administration towards the expedition was not limited to the choosing of the destination. The setting of the revised date for launching the often post-poned expedition was the result of the haphazard way in which planning was carried out at the highest levels of the federal command.



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In a letter to a friend, DuPont described a late-night meeting on October 1st among Lincoln, Secretary Cameron, Secretary of State Seward, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Fox, General McClellan, General Sherman, and him, among others. After a prolonged and inconclusive argument over who had authorized another joint expedition to clear the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River of Confederate shore batteries, the discussion turned to the Port Royal Expedition. In what DuPont termed "the haste of ignorance" a decision was made that the expedition must sail within four days.<sup>49</sup> It didn't make it.

The final days before the expedition sailed - to as a yet undecided destination - were used to conduct a rehearsal of the landing, and also to adopt the Army's newly-devised semaphore signalling system to shipboard use. DuPont was so impressed with its efficiency compared to the cumbersome use of naval signal flag hoists that he recommended its adoption navy-wide.<sup>50</sup>

The expedition sailed from Hampton Roads on October 29th, 1861, in the face of a gathering storm. By the next afternoon, the conditions had deteriorated to the point where DuPont signaled all ships that they were to fend for themselves and make no further attempt to maintain station in the formation. Despite the severity of the storm, when most of the scattered fleet reassembled off the Port Royal Bar DuPont discovered that only two ships had been lost: a

transport carrying 600 Marines (seven men lost) and a supply ship. Ships would continue to straggle in right up to the time of the attack three days later.<sup>51</sup>

After initially deciding to land his troops on the north side of the harbor against Fort Beauregard, on November 6th, the day before the attack, Sherman shifted his plan to the south against Fort Walker. Sherman informed DuPont of the change but did not consult him on it, the disposition of the land forces was evidently not thought to be under DuPont's purview:

All the way down on studying over the maps, the General considered 'Bay Point' fort as the best point to attack and land on - why they changed to Hilton Head I don't quite understand. I fear for the military and I think they would be more secure on the other shore from the one we are going to.<sup>52</sup>

The greater part of November 5th was spent sounding and then marking the entrance channel with bouys. The reconnaissance of the 5th had revealed several important facts: both forts were more formidable than had been expected; and, more importantly, shoal water made a landing of troops to support the attack impracticable. As Sherman recounts in his report to the Adjutant-General:

Our original plan of cooperation of the land forces in this attack had to be set aside in consequence of the loss, during the voyage, of a greater portion of our means of disembarkment, together with the fact that the only point where the troops should have landed was from 5 to 6 miles (measuring around the intervening shoal) from the anchoring place of our transports - altogether too great a distance for successful debarkation with our limited means. It was therefore agreed that the place should be reduced by the naval force

alone . . . . I was a mere spectator of the combat  
. . . . I deem the performance a masterly one, and  
it ought to have been seen to be fully  
appreciated.<sup>53</sup>

Given DuPont's opinions, expressed in his October 17th letter to his wife, that a land assault was both hazardous and unnecessary, it is reasonable to assume that he was not dissatisfied by these developments and may well have used them in an attempt to convince Sherman that a coordinated attack on the forts was not feasible.

An attempt to start the attack on the 6th had to be cancelled because a strong southerly wind made maneuvering the slow, high-sided naval ships impractical in the restricted entrance to the sound. Some of the smaller gunboats entered the sound to investigate the fortifications and exchanged some long-range fire with the Confederate batteries.<sup>54</sup> The delay on the 6th turned out to have been very fortitious as related in DuPont's journal for that day:

The only apprehension [about the delay] was that the soldiers should consider us slow - and now comes something to show how absurd it would have been to be governed by such a feeling. Just at sunset General Sherman and his three brigadiers were announced, I thought they were coming to see civilly why we had not moved. Not at all, rather to say they were glad I had not, and S.[Sherman] imparted to me a piece of information which nearly has broken him down, though I rallied him much before he left. After all his precautions, and my talking of not putting all the eggs in one basket and citing the Crimean experience, etc., the whole of their ordnance and ammunition is in one ship, the *Ocean Express*, which was towed by the *Baltic* until the gale when they separated, and she has not yet arrived - so that when they land it will be with a hundred rounds of cartridges, about two

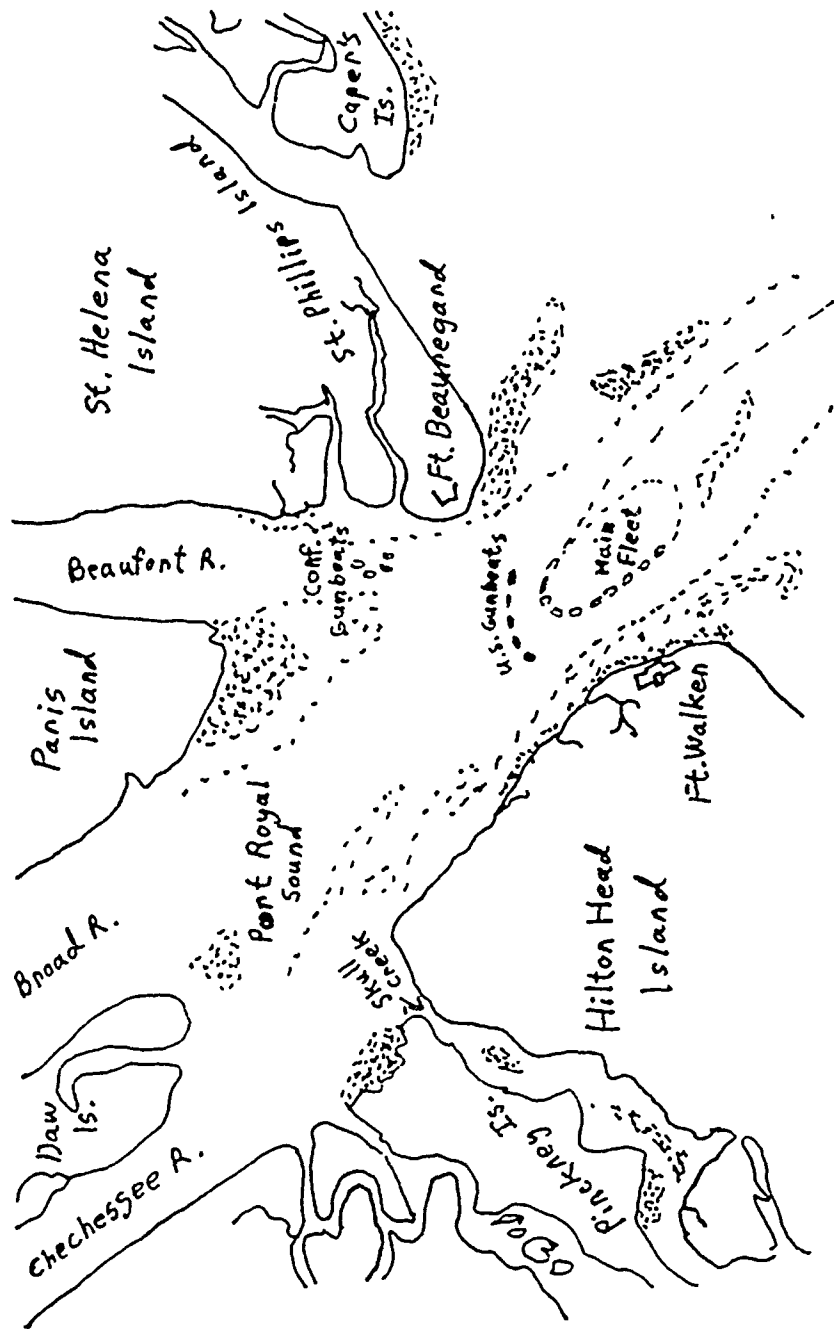


days' supply for a short skirmish or two. Sherman had ordered three millions - the only other vessel that had rifle and musket powder, the *Union*, was lost!<sup>55</sup>

Despite this object lesson in the importance of combat loading, things began to look up. The dawn of the 7th showed a great improvement in the weather and DuPont made the decision to commence the attack. There were some anxious moments getting the larger ships over the bar, at one point in the channel, several vessels had less than one foot of water under their keels. It quickly became apparent that the fight would be more difficult than the one Butler and Stringham had faced at Hatteras Inlet.<sup>56</sup>

The two mile-wide entrance was protected by two forts: Fort Beauregard on Bay Point to the north, and Fort Walker on Hilton Head to the south. Both forts were well placed, sturdily built, and well-armed. Additionally their garrisons, while still inexperienced, were better-trained than the Confederate gunners had been at Hatteras. DuPont's battle plan involved concentrating first on the most formidable work, Fort Walker. This plan would allow the fleet to engage the fort at close range, an attempt to engage both forts simultaneously would have involved longer-range fire at a cost in accuracy. Dividing his ships into two groups, he assigned the smaller one to prevent the small squadron of makeshift Confederate gunboats from interfering with the attack and then to take

Attack on Forts Walker  
and Beauregard



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up a position to take the seaward face of the fort under enfilading fire. Keeping his main body in a traditional "line ahead" column formation he intended to keep Fort Walker under continuous fire by steaming in a continuous series of ovals near to the fort. By keeping his ships moving rather than stationary as had been done at Hatteras, DuPont presented a more difficult target for the shore guns.<sup>57</sup>

The attack went according to plan. The Confederate gunners put up a stiff resistance but were overmatched by the volume, accuracy, and firepower of the naval bombardment. The makeshift Confederate naval flotilla under Tatnall made an attempt to interfere with the attack but had to withdraw from the battle. The first Federal broadside made it apparent that further resistance by his small steamers was pointless. After four hours of punishing fire and three passes by the fleet, Walker's garrison fled out the rear of the fort. A landing party of Marines and sailors from the *Wabash* found the fort deserted and raised the U.S. flag.<sup>58</sup>

The relatively bloodless (eight killed, twenty-three wounded) victory over Fort Walker was followed by more gains. The Marines were landed at the fort, followed by Sherman's troops. Both landings were unopposed and completed without incident. Fort Beauregard's garrison had been in an ideal location to watch the devastating effect

which the shelling had on Fort Walker. Witnessing the abandonment of Walker, and knowing that the same ordeal was planned for them, Beauregard's garrison abandoned their post. Sherman's troops landed on Bay Point on the morning of the 8th to take possession of the fort.<sup>59</sup>

As the Federal soldiers and sailors celebrated their triumph, it was not until gunboats began to explore Port Royal Sound that the magnitude of their victory became apparent to DuPont and Sherman. Not only were there no more fortifications, there were no troops or even any civilians to be found. Farms, plantations, and even towns and small cities were virtually abandoned except for slaves, who were either wandering about aimlessly or looting the homes of their former masters. Not only had the Federals won control of the entrance to Port Royal Sound, they had, at least for the present, uncontested access to almost the entire coastal area between Charleston and Savannah.<sup>60</sup>

Port Royal was originally conceived as primarily a single service operation. The Navy would provide transportation to the Army troops. Since it was an accepted as gospel that "ships cannot fight forts," the real work of attacking and capturing the Confederate works would fall to the Army with the Navy limited to providing artillery support from the heavy guns of the fleet. The prolonged delays in launching the expedition allowed time

for a new gospel to arise. The Hatteras Inlet fight had shown that ships could not only fight forts, they could beat them.

This new reality presented a unique opportunity to the Federal commanders. Now the North's overwhelming advantage of seapower could be used for more than just blockading the Southern coastline. Ships and gunboats could now challenge and even overcome shore batteries, thereby exposing a tremendous portion of the Confederate coastline to a "waterborne cavalry" force of Army troops and Navy gunboats. Used properly these forces could either control a significant amount of territory or force the Confederates to divert troops desperately needed elsewhere to guard the coast. Additionally the mobility afforded by the inland waterway system presented the Federal forces with an opportunity to seize and maintain the initiative. They could move a sizable landing force to almost any location far faster than the enemy could move troops to oppose them.

The importance of the victory must be viewed in the context of the 1861. Up until November the only real Union victory in the war had been the Hatteras Inlet operation. The embarrassing defeat at Bull Run in July, followed by a bloody Union repulse at Ball's Bluff just two days before the expedition sailed, made its outcome of even greater importance to the Union. The seizing of Port Royal was an

important morale boost for the North, earning DuPont and Sherman the thanks of Congress, and even a congratulatory General Order from McClellan.

Although a stunning victory had been achieved it was nothing compared to the opportunities which slipped away. The scattered, demoralized Confederate forces left in the area were capable of only token resistance. Savannah was virtually undefended and even a quick move against Charleston could have secured that city. Although both Sherman and DuPont slowly became aware of the opportunities available to them, they never could seem to be ready at the same time to do anything about it. The joint forces would spend the next five months expanding and consolidating their hold on the coast, sealing it more effectively than any blockade could do.

Although the War Department had made it clear to Sherman that the expedition was not intended to conduct operations in the interior, in time even they began to have second thoughts and started pressuring Sherman to seize more territory. Unfortunately for Sherman, the Confederate government was quick to realize the threat posed by an enemy force between Savannah and Charleston and rushed troops to the area. The opportunities of November would not be seen again and Sherman unjustly became the scapegoat.

On March 15th, 1862, Sherman was relieved for lack of aggressiveness. His replacement, Major-General David Hunter, would play a key role in the upcoming campaign against Charleston. The Port Royal Expedition was a success but it was viewed as a partial failure for not doing enough. The campaign against Charleston would be a genuine failure for trying to do too much.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won (Urbana, Ill:Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983), 35.

<sup>2</sup>Hattaway, How the North Won, 35.

<sup>3</sup>Richard S. West, Mr. Lincoln's Navy (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1957), 45.

<sup>4</sup>West, Mr. Lincoln's Navy, 45, and a22 J.D. Hayes Civil War Letters of S.F. DuPont (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), 74 (hereafter cited as SFD).

<sup>5</sup>Hayes, SFD, 76.

<sup>6</sup>For a discussion on the condition of the navy at the war's outbreak see the introduction to David D. Porter Naval History of the Civil War (New York:Sherman Publishing Co., 1889)

<sup>7</sup>West, Mr. Lincoln's Navy, 52.

<sup>8</sup>Hayes, SFD, 74.

<sup>9</sup>Hayes, SFD, 86.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Congress. Senate. Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Port Royal Expedition, 38th Cong., 2nd session, 1865, 313-15.(Hereafter cited as Joint)

<sup>11</sup>Hayes, SFD, 86.

<sup>12</sup>Joint, 313-15.

<sup>13</sup>Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies during the War of the Rebellion (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1901) ser I, vol XII, 198-99. (hereafter cited as QRN)

<sup>14</sup>Bruce Catton, The Coming Fury (New York: Washington Square Press, 1961), 440-1.

<sup>15</sup>Rowena Reed Combined Operations in the Civil War (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1978), 11.

<sup>16</sup>Joint:Hatteras Inlet, 282.

<sup>17</sup>Joint:Hatteras Inlet, 282.

<sup>18</sup>West, Mr. Lincoln's Navy, 54.



<sup>19</sup>Joint: Hatteras Inlet, 282 and a8 West, Lincoln's Navy, 77-79.

<sup>20</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 79.

<sup>21</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 80.

<sup>22</sup>Joint: Hatteras Inlet, 284 and a8 West, Lincoln's Navy, 54.

<sup>23</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 82.

<sup>24</sup>Hayes, SFD, 142.

<sup>25</sup>Hayes, SFD, 150, 156.

<sup>26</sup>Reed, Combined Operations, 106.

<sup>27</sup>ORN, 1st ser., XII, 208.

<sup>28</sup>Carroll S. Alden, George Hamilton Perkins (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), 548.

<sup>29</sup>Bruce Catton, Terrible Swift Sword (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 92.

<sup>30</sup>Hayes, SFD, 113.

<sup>31</sup>Hayes, SFD, 116.

<sup>32</sup>Hayes, SFD, 145.

<sup>33</sup>Hayes, SFD, 187.

<sup>34</sup>Hayes, SFD, 207.

<sup>35</sup>Hayes, SFD, 181.

<sup>36</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 82.

<sup>37</sup>Charles H. Davis Jr., Life of Charles Henry Davis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1899), 199.

<sup>38</sup>Catton, Sword, 92-3.

<sup>39</sup>Catton, Sword, 93.

<sup>40</sup>Catton, Sword, 93.

<sup>41</sup>For a full discussion of the expedition's inability to exploit their success see BG Sherman's testimony of April 15, 1862. U.S. Congress. Senate. Report of the Joint

Committee on the Conduct of the War. Port Royal Expedition, 38th Congress, 2nd session, 1865.

<sup>42</sup>Joint, 293-4.

<sup>43</sup>The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington:GPO, 1898), 1st ser., VI, 168. (hereafter cited as ORA)

<sup>44</sup>"The invasion and occupation of the seacoasts of the states in rebellion, as proposed by the Navy Department, having been accepted by the government, and an officer of great merit designated by the War Department to organize the expedition in conjunction with the Navy, you are hereby selected to cooperate with this officer.

The importance of this expedition upon the flank of the enemy cannot be overestimated; and in confiding its preparation and organization to your hands, the Department hereby gives you the full authority necessary to ensure success.

You will proceed to New York as early as practicable, and communicate this order to the officer selected by the War Department; and you will lose no time in getting afloat.

Further orders will be transmitted to you before sailing."  
From ORN, 1st ser., XII, 207.

<sup>45</sup>Hayes, SFD, 147.

<sup>46</sup>Hayes, SFD, 130.

<sup>47</sup>ORN, 1st ser., XII, 209-230.

<sup>48</sup>Hayes, SFD, 171.

<sup>49</sup>Hayes, SFD, 164.

<sup>50</sup>Hayes, SFD, 201-2.

<sup>51</sup>Catton, Sword, 94.

<sup>52</sup>Hayes, SFD, 218.

<sup>53</sup>ORN ser I, vol XII, 288-9.

<sup>54</sup>ORN ser I, vol XII, 259-62.

<sup>55</sup>Hayes, SFD, 221.

<sup>56</sup>Catton, Sword, 94, and ORN, ser I, vol XII, 260.

<sup>57</sup>Catton, Sword, 94-5, and ORN, ser I, vol XII, 262.

<sup>58</sup>Catton, Sword, 94-5.

<sup>59</sup>Catton, Sword, 96, and QRN ser I, vol XII, 264-66.

<sup>60</sup>Catton, Sword, 96.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CHARLESTON CAMPAIGN

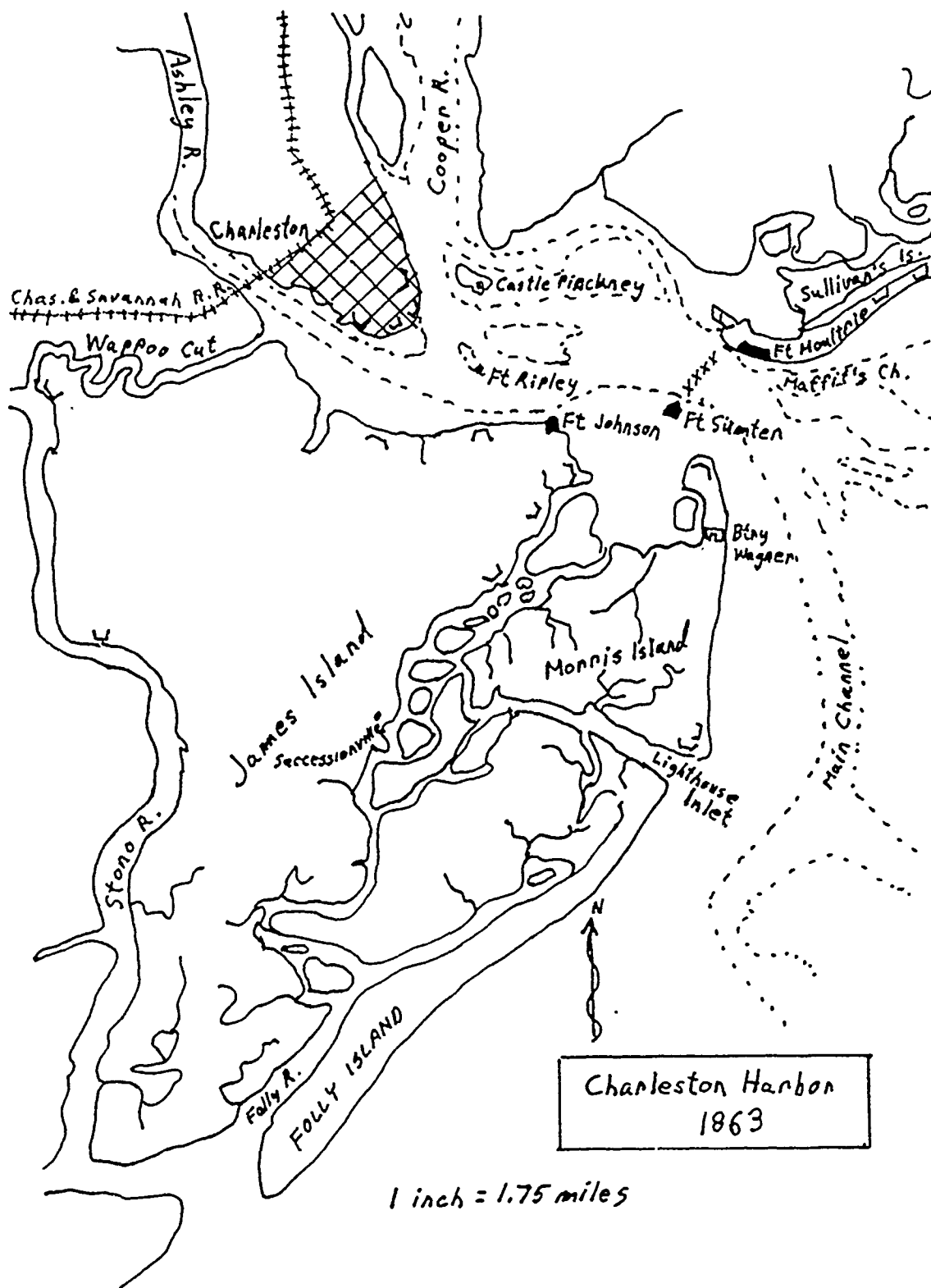
Satisfying as it was to have Federal forces on the soil of South Carolina, inevitably the Union commanders on the scene began to consider an irresistible, tantalizing prospect: the capture of Charleston. As the "cradle of secession", South Carolina aroused feelings of hatred and revenge among northerners to a degree never extended to any other Southern state. The focus of those feelings was Charleston, "that pestilent nest of heresy" as termed by Francis Adams, America's Minister to England.<sup>1</sup> Having completed their mission of establishing a naval base on the coast of South Carolina, the commanders of the Port Royal Expedition began looking around for a suitable objective. By an incremental process, that objective became Charleston.

The possibility of taking Charleston was not apparent to the Union forces early in 1862. They spent the first half of the year slowly expanding their span of control

over the surrounding coastal areas in a series of operations with limited objectives, each building on the initial success of the seizure of Port Royal, and none exploiting their successes to the fullest.

By early February, Federal forces had gained control of St. Helena's Sound and moved up the North Edisto River (see map page 54). On the 11th, Brigadier General Sherman, recently designated as the first commander of the Department of the South, ordered that a post be established on the North Edisto River. Its commander, Colonel H. Moore, reported that when he reached a point known as Point of Pines he was only 25 miles from Charleston, and that, although the enemy was "all around us", with the aid of gunboats and 10,000 troops at the most, he felt he could be in Charleston in less than three days.<sup>2</sup> He probably could have. From the start of the Port Royal Expedition in late 1861 until the attempt to take Charleston was abandoned over two years later, this theater of war was marked by an uninterrupted series of missed opportunities. By the time the Federals either recognized the opportunities they had won, or were ready to do something about them, the Confederates had reacted and staved off disaster yet again.

The operations on the Stono River in the Spring of 1862 were probably the most flagrant example of letting an opportunity slip by. At its closest approach the Stono



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passes within three miles of Charleston. Navy gunboats conducting reconnaissance on the river in May were surprised to find it undefended all the way up to the entrance to Wappoo Cut, a shallow but passable waterway which could have allowed Federal gunboats and troops to bypass the extensive harbor defenses. On May 31st the commander of the Union Naval forces near Charleston, Flag Officer (Rear Admiral) Samuel F. DuPont, reported to the Secretary of the Navy that his forces had complete possession of the Stono, and that his Army counterpart, Major General David Hunter, proposed to take advantage of it for further operations against Charleston.<sup>3</sup>

In a pattern that was to become familiar throughout the campaign, the Federals had conducted reconnaissance in an obvious manner. Alerting the Confederates to the danger they were in, they were so slow in moving to take advantage of their discoveries that the enemy had ample time to erect new defenses. General Hunter moved troops up to unoccupied James Island and began to establish a base of operations, apparently assuming that the enemy would wait patiently for him to complete his preparations. They did not. The Confederates rushed troops to Charleston, fortified the Stono, and occupied all of James Island, except for the small portion under Federal control. When, on his own initiative, one of Hunter's subordinate generals made an attempt to seize all of James Island, his force was

decisively beaten at Secessionville. Hunter was furious and embarrassed. He sent the offending general home under arrest and promptly evacuated James Island, neglecting to inform the Navy of his actions.<sup>4</sup> The Confederate Commander at Charleston, General Pierre G.T. Beauregard, stated after the war that if the Federals had concentrated even their limited troop strength against James Island any time up until the Spring of 1863 he would have been unable to save Charleston.<sup>5</sup>

The precipitate retreat from the Stono was one of the first problems in joint cooperation to surface. DuPont's opinion of the Army's capability was becoming more negative as time went on. Shortly after the withdrawal he complained to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy: "Oh those Soldiers, I put them nearly on top of the house in Charleston, but I did not push them into the windows and they came back."<sup>6</sup>

Although DuPont's criticism was minor, it marked a subtle but important shift in the tone of the relationship between the services. Until shortly after Hunter's assumption of command of the Department of the South in late March, there had been numerous small, but successful, joint operations all along the coast, from the Stono south to St. Augustine, Florida. The subordinate commanders from both services realized that both branches working together could achieve more than either could separately.



Some of those successes could be laid to the cordial relationship between DuPont and Hunter's predecessor, Brigadier General T.W. Sherman. Sherman was a stolid if unimaginative general who was willing to defer to DuPont on joint matters. Hunter was a political general, who like Ben Butler had to be humored by Lincoln for the sake of the war effort. Hunter was unwilling to accept or imply any degree of subordination to DuPont, a situation bound to cause friction with the touchy and prerogative-obsessed Admiral.

Another factor, besides the change in Army commanders, was that DuPont himself had undergone a transformation from the time of his aggressive attack on Port Royal. The tedium of occupation and blockade duty set in. From the Winter of 1861 onward, his official correspondence with the Navy Department dealt increasingly with administrative details and less and less with operational matters. His ideas and proposals regarding new operations against the enemy became rarer as time went on.<sup>7</sup> A man who is losing interest in initiative may find it to be an irritating quality in a colleague whom he is required to work with closely. Despite his poor showing at James Island, Hunter would prove to be the more aggressive commander.

One lasting effect of the Battle of Seccessionville was that the War Department came to view the Charleston

area as as expensive sideshow. After the Seccessionville fight, the War Department withdrew seven of Hunter's regiments to reenforce other theaters, leaving him with insufficient forces to renew offensive operations against Charleston. A manpower shortage would hobble the Army's efforts near Charleston for the remainder of the war.<sup>8</sup> Secretary of War Stanton and his Chief of Staff, Major General H.W. Halleck, were willing to let the Army cooperate with the Navy in any attempt to seize Charleston but they were unwilling to commit substantial numbers of new troops to it.

After the failure of the assault of Seccessionville and the abandonment by the Federal troops of the footholds they had secured on James Island in June, more than a year elapsed before any demonstration of note was made on Charleston by the land forces. In the meantime the operations against that city and it's harbor were left to the navy, the land forces being in readiness to co-operate with it when occasion offered.<sup>9</sup>

Besides the obvious propaganda victory attached to the capture of Charleston, its seizure was attractive to the Navy for another reason. Charleston was a difficult port to blockade. Its numerous channels required a large number of ships to cover them, ships that were needed to hunt down the alarmingly successful Confederate commerce raiders such as the *Alabama* and *Florida*. Charleston's numerous defenses forced the blockading fleet to remain well offshore, further complicating the problem. From the Navy's point of view, the capture of Charleston was an

excellent goal for the Union forces, except for one problem, it was considered invulnerable to naval attack.<sup>10</sup>

The reasons for this reputation were sound. The first dealt with the nature of the harbor itself. The four channels leading up to the mouth of the harbor were all narrow and the two major ones, Maffit's Channel and the Main Channel, both ran close to the shoreline, virtually under the guns of the harbor defenses. The channels all joined at the mouth of the harbor which was only one mile wide, allowing forts on either side to control it. Any ship that managed to penetrate the entrance would find itself in a small cul-de-sac, within range of any shore gun emplaced almost anywhere around the harbor's circumference. Charleston Harbor was littered with many shoal areas and, like the entrance channels, all navigation markers had been removed. The land approaches to the city, while not impassable, were largely through swamps that would slow any attacker and preclude any lightning fast surprise moves unless they were launched only a short distance away, such as the opportunity lost on the Stono.

The relatively small size of the harbor and the limited area within it available to medium draft ships made it impractical to "run" the forts as had been done at New Orleans and as would be repeated at Mobile Bay. Even if Union warships succeeded in steaming past the outer forts, an extensive system of batteries and fortifications around

the entire periphery of the harbor would be able to keep the ships under continuous fire.<sup>11</sup>

Adding to the formidable natural obstacles, the Confederates, realizing that Charleston was a prize that their enemies would try to take, had been working hard at installing defenses. The Federal's methodical if inept handling of the James Island and Stono River operations during the early Summer of 1862 had alerted the Confederates that the awaited assault on Charleston was coming and preparations continued with even more urgency. The Confederate's efforts received another impetus that fall with the appointment of General Pierre G.T. Beauregard as commander of the forces in Charleston, a post he would hold until the Federal threat against the city had faded away. Beauregard was capable, imaginative, and determined to hold the city.<sup>12</sup>

Some of Beauregard's most important innovations were used to defend against a naval attack. One of the most ineffective, but conversly the most feared, were "torpedoes", crude contact mines moored in the channels. Another simple device that was to have a significant impact on Federal naval plans was the installation of obstructions in the narrow portion of the inner harbor. Installed close to the shore batteries, the rope obstructions posed a significant problem to the propeller driven ships of that time. The steam propulsion plants of that era were capable

of turning propellers only at slow speed and with relatively little horsepower, making the ships vulnerable to being crippled by rope entangled in their propellers. Clearing the obstructions would be time consuming and dangerous, requiring men in small boats to be exposed to the close-range fire of the forts. The Confederates also planted bouys to act as range markers for their gunners on the shore and those gunners practiced until they were at least as good as any in the Federal Navy.<sup>13</sup>

And, most importantly, the Confederates kept installing more and more large artillery pieces around the harbor. By April 1863 they would be able to muster a far greater amount of firepower than any fleet attacking them. The forts and batteries of Charleston could deliver a greater volume of firepower into the harbor than anywhere else in the world.<sup>14</sup> Although their guns were smaller than those carried by the ships, they had many more of them. Finally, the earthworks in which those gun were installed were greatly improved over the hastily improvised works which DuPont had faced at Port Royal. They were capable of absorbing the largest caliber shells in the Federal arsenal, and their guns could normally only be disabled by a direct hit on the muzzle of the gun.

The old saying that success has many fathers while failure is a bastard certainly applied to the Charleston Campaign. While there is no lack of memoirs and other

written records from the principle participants, no one stepped forward and claimed responsibility for originating the idea of an ironclad attack. The genesis of the original idea appears to lie with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavus Fox. Fox was what, in modern parlance, might be known as an "idea man." Quick to think up grandiose concepts, he was just as quickly bored by the details of planning them. In the aftermath of McClellan's defeat and withdrawal from the Peninsular Campaign, Fox saw an opportunity for the Navy to win the public acclaim and recognition which he thought was long overdue.<sup>15</sup>

The single most important event which made a naval attack upon Charleston seem feasible was the well known battle of March 9th, 1862, between the ironclads *Monitor* and *Virginia* (aka *Merrimac*). In the aftermath of the *Monitor*'s victory, the possibilities of ironclads seemed unlimited. If the wood hulled ships of Farragut and DuPont could subdue forts and bypass them, then a fleet of ironclads should be able to overcome any fort in the world. The "Monitor craze" was shared by the government, the public, and many Navy officers. The advent of ironclad warships made the desirable goal of seizing Charleston seem attainable.<sup>16</sup>

The successes at New Orleans, Hatteras Inlet, and Port Royal had made the success of ships attacking forts to seem a foregone conclusion. While the senior leadership in

Washington admitted that the defenses of Charleston were far stronger than anything encountered by the Navy up to that time, it was assumed that the defensive attributes of the ironclads would more than offset it.

What made the possibility even more appealing was that not only could Charleston be captured but the Navy had the means to do it by itself, freed from the necessity of sharing the credit with the Army. Glory, rather than credit, is probably a more accurate term when describing how the Federals thought of the capture of Charleston, "the cradle of secession." No one was quicker to grasp that possibility than Fox, and no one would work harder to champion it. His first mention of an ironclad attack on Charleston appears in a letter on May 12th, 1862, to DuPont:

Now that thing are breaking up entirely in Virginia we are ready to give you a force for Charleston . . . . If we give you the *Galena* and *Monitor*, don't you think we can go squarely at it by the channel, so as to make it purely Navy? Any other plan we shall play second. Port Royal and New Orleans suit me . . . . If you can finish Charleston with the Navy the country will rejoice above all other victories.<sup>17</sup>

DuPont was not enthusiastic about Fox's idea and replied on May 25th: "All will be done that it is in the power of man and men to do - but do not underrate the work; all the defenses for one year now have been seaward."<sup>18</sup> Dupont's reluctance to attack would give the Confederates another eleven months to strengthen their defenses,

strengthen them to the point that those of May 1862 were inconsequential in comparison.

Fox was not an easy man to put off, the idea of a purely naval attack had captured his imagination and also presented an opportunity for the Navy to get the national attention he felt it had deserved but had not yet received. In a series of correspondence with DuPont through the summer of 1862, Fox tried to convince DuPont of the feasibility of his plan:

I also notice your remarks about the Harbor of Charleston. It may be impossible, but the crowning act of this war ought to be by the navy. I feel that my duties are two fold; first, to beat our southern friends; second, to beat the Army . . . The Army never do us justice, not even when we win it.<sup>19</sup>

Despite DuPont's repeated warnings that ironclads could not overcome powerful shore batteries such as those at Charleston, both Welles and Assistant Secretary Fox remained convinced that the ironclads were invincible. Unlike DuPont, they focused exclusively on the ironclad's perceived ability to withstand any amount of punishment, while ignoring evidence that their offensive capability was severely limited.<sup>20</sup>

DuPont remained unconvinced. He had earlier served on a board commissioned by the Secretary of the Navy to investigate the feasibility of building ironclads, and had ultimately recommended their construction. Despite his involvement in the birth of the ironclads, he never fully



believed in them, or possibly feared the threat they posed to the continued existence of the elegant sail powered ships he had spent decades serving in. DuPont was accepting of new technology and new ideas but the revolutionary nature of the ironclads may have been too much even for him.

Deciding that the ironclads would have to be tested against Confederate shore fortifications before being sent against the formidable defenses of Charleston, DuPont selected Fort McAllister, a large earthen fort guarding the Ogeechee River near Savannah. The results of several engagements in February and March, 1863, were less than conclusive. The good news was that the ironclads withstood the fire from McAllister's large caliber guns without serious problems. The bad news was that their limited armament (2 guns each) meant that they could not return a large volume of fire, and what fire they could return had little apparent effect on the well-protected guns of the fort.<sup>21</sup>

As 1862 passed into 1863, Fox maintained the momentum in his effort to make a purely naval attack on Charleston. He was aided in his effort by the War Department. Stanton and Halleck did not do much to help the Navy in its efforts, but more importantly they did not actively oppose them. There were several reasons for the War Department's benign neglect of the Charleston Campaign.

They did not share the Navy's desire for ever greater press coverage and resulting national attention. The seemingly unending string of disasters which had befallen the Army of the Potomac had given them all the press coverage they could possibly want.

Unlike the Navy, the senior leadership of the Army rarely seemed to express any jealousy over which service recieved the most attention from joint operations, nor should they have. The Army was well aware that while the Union's control of seapower was a definite asset in the war it would never be considered as decisive. Throughout the war, all of the Army's senior leaders would view the joint coastal operations, if they thought of them at all, as a helpful sideshows at best, and as dangerous diversions of scarce resources at worst.

They were willing to see the Navy gain the credit of capturing Charleston so long as it need not place any additional demands for troops upon the Army. The Army's main effort and the focus of its concentration throughout the spring and early summer of 1863 was on preparing the Army of the Potomac for yet another "On to Richmond" thrust, one that would result in yet another Union defeat at Chancellorsville in May. What little enthusiasm the War Department did have for the Charleston campaign was due to its potential for drawing the enemy's attention away from the Chancellorsville effort. All the joint operations must

be viewed against the larger backdrop of the war, since the manpower, resources, and attention they recieved were directly affected by other, more well-known operations.

In Fox's mind the importance of gaining a purely Navy victory against such a prominent objective as Charleston began to outweigh all other factors in whether and when to conduct it. His correspondence with DuPont begins to take on a decidedly anti-Army tone during this period:

-- letter of February 16th, 1863, from Fox to DuPont ". . . take your time my dear Admiral we only say do it, but I beg of you do not take those soldiers too closely into your counsels in a purely naval matter."<sup>22</sup>

--letter of February 20th, 1863 from Fox to DuPont "The President and Mr. Welles are very much struck with this program and Halleck and Cullem [Army Adjutant General], as I have written you, declare that all of their defenses must be evacuated if you pass the forts. The sublimity of such a silent attack is beyond words to describe, and I beg of you not to let the Army spoil it. The immortal wreath of laurel should cluster around your flag alone."<sup>23</sup>

Late January 1863 provided the advocates of an ironclad attack with an additional motivation for the attack, the need to redeem the Navy's honor in front of Charleston. Two tactically insignificant incidents received undue weight for a reason common in military bureaucracies, they embarrassed the front office. On January 30th the gunboat *USS Issac Smith* was reconnoitering the Stono River when she was surprised by Confederate shore batteries. After a few minutes she was heavily damaged and

had to surrender. The Navy's well publicized claims to own the Stono were discredited.<sup>24</sup>

On January 31st, two small Confederate ironclad rams, *CSS Chicora* and *CSS Palmetto State* ventured out of Charleston Harbor for the first time. A combination of poor visibility on the water and complacency and negligence on the Federal blockade ships allowed the Confederate ships to catch two of them by surprise. Both the *USS Keystone State* and the *USS Mercita* lowered their flags after being fired on by the rams. The Confederate ships made no attempt to take possession of either ship at the time, being intent on attacking even more Union ships, and in the confusion both Federal ships slipped away in the mist.<sup>25</sup>

The incident was both embarrassing and serious for the Navy and the Federal Government. The embarrassment came from the undeniable fact that the Union ships had been asleep at their posts. Additionally the Confederates were quick to claim that the escape of the surrendered ships was both illegal and dishonorable. The most serious aspect of the affair was that the Confederate government, with some justification, claimed that the Federal blockade of Charleston had been raised. If acknowledged, such a claim would require the North to go through a lengthy notification process of numerous foreign government in order to reestablish the blockade.<sup>26</sup>

As commander of the blockade off Charleston, DuPont was responsible for denying that the blockade had been raised and went to great pains in a protracted round of legalistic correspondence with the Secretary of the Navy to claim that the U.S. Navy had been in uninterrupted control of Charleston Harbor. Although the government, for obvious reasons, accepted DuPont's arguments and refused to recognize the Confederate claim of a raised blockade, the affair put a strain on DuPont's relations with Secretary Welles and left both him and the Secretary eager to erase the entire embarrassing episode from the public's memory.

What little joint planning that was needed for the ironclad's attack proceeded apace with no significant problems. The relationship between Hunter and DuPont had settled into a formal but workable one. Frustrated with his role as a commander in a secondary theater, Hunter was more excited and optimistic about the Navy's attack than DuPont was himself. The plan for the attack was striking in its simplicity. This simplicity was not the result of a conscious effort to facilitate action, rather it stemmed from uncertainty over just what results could be expected from the attack.

In essence, the plan called for the fleet to approach Fort Sumter, subdue the fort, remove any obstructions and then either enter the inner harbor or assist the Army in crossing to Morris Island and capturing

its fortifications. Once inside the harbor it was hoped that the Confederate forces and the civilian populace would become so terrified by the spectacle of ironclads in the heart of the city that the fortifications and city would surrender. Hunter's role was to occupy Folly Island and Seabrook Islands, and once the Confederates began to flee from the ships, his troops would move against Charleston along the south side of the harbor, disperse any remaining resistance, and occupy Charleston.<sup>27</sup>

Hunter felt that the soundest approach would be for the Army to land on Morris Island, supported by the fleet, storm the Confederate defenses on the island, and then install heavy siege artillery on its northern tip. The artillery fire could reduce Sumter to rubble allowing the fleet to clear the obstructions and enter the harbor unimpeded. The War Department was not interested in such an active role, or anything to do with siege operations. Resigned to a supporting role since his lack of troop strength precluded anything more ambitious, Hunter prepared to support the Navy's effort. In his letter of January 26th to Halleck, Hunter asked that more priority be given to filling his requisitions

. . . in order that the Army may not be behind when the Navy is ready. It would be a reproach to our service, or at least a chance of honorable distinction lost, should we not be able to take part in the reduction of Charleston. I would much prefer assisting the Navy, and receiving assistance from the gallant men under Admiral DuPont to merely

entering Charleston as a garrison of occupation under cover of the guns of the fleet.<sup>28</sup>

DuPont came under increasing pressure from the Navy Department to commence his attack at the earliest possible time. He had been given every ironclad in the fleet, except for one held back in Hampton Roads. They were urgently needed elsewhere, particularly for an attempt to open the Mississippi River from the south, or at least to take pressure off of Grant's stalled attempts to reach Vicksburg. The Lincoln administration was becoming increasingly anxious over DuPont's delays. Lincoln attached great importance to the diversionary value of the Charleston attack with regard to the upcoming Chancellorsville campaign. He was also sensitive to increasing pressure in the press for the attack to commence. Like most joint operations, its details had been discussed at length in the papers for some time.<sup>29</sup>

As delay followed delay Welles became convinced that DuPont was too pessimistic about the chances for success. In his diary on March 12, Welles recorded that DuPont was becoming very cautious concerning the attack and was beginning to come in line with the view of the Army officers that the batteries at the mouth of the harbor should be the objective of the assault rather than running the fleet past them. The President agreed with Wells that any delay to April was unacceptable.<sup>30</sup>

--Welles diary of April 9th, 1863 'The President, who has often a sort of intuitive

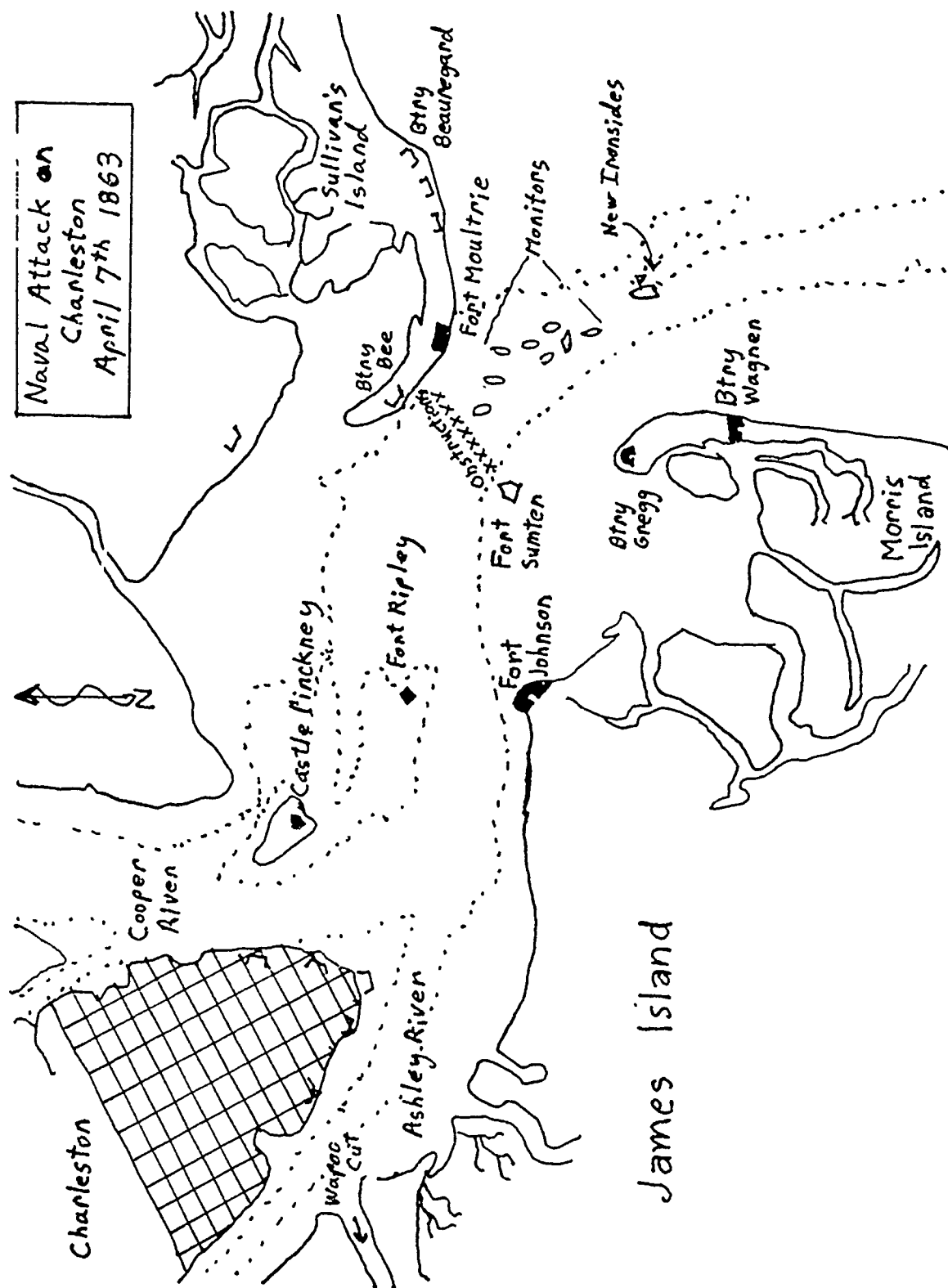
sagacity, has spoken discouragingly of operations at Charleston during the whole season. DuPont's dispatches and movements have not inspired him with faith; they remind him, he says, of McClellan.'<sup>31</sup>

DuPont had nine ironclads at his disposal, eight monitors (although not the namesake which had sunk in a gale off Cape Hatteras the previous winter due to the notoriously bad sea-keeping qualities of those ships). His flag ship, *USS New Ironsides*, an iron plated, high-sided frigate, a one-of-a-kind vessel, and another experimental vessel, *USS Keokuk*, similar to a monitor but much more lightly armored and whose two guns were in fixed positions rather than turrets.<sup>32</sup>

The monitors were unweildy vessels, slow and difficult to manuever under the best of circumstances. Although their 9" of armour plating and low silouette gave them substantial protection against serious damage, they were by no means immune. The mechanism for rotating their turrets was fragile and prone to jam and the bolts holding the armor in place had a tendency to shear off under the impact of shellfire, turning the boltheads into deadly shrapnel.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the cramp conditions of the ironclad's turrets greatly increased the reload time for their guns. These factors together would give the defenders a volume of fire advantage of at least 6:1 over the ironclads.<sup>34</sup>

The attack began on the morning of April 7th, 1863. The monitor *Weehawken* led the Federal battle line into the





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harbor. She pushed a raft ahead of her in an attempt to defeat the Confederate mines but the raft made *Weehawken* almost unsteerable. As *Weehawken* sheared around in the channel the monitors following her were thrown into confusion trying to avoid colliding with her and each other. The confusion increased when DuPont's flagship, *New Ironsides*, discovered that the channel was too shallow for her draft and so she had to anchor outside the harbor. The Union fleet's battle plan was so disrupted that by the time the firing commenced at noon, *Keokuk*, which originally had been the last ship in line ended up leading the fleet into the harbor.<sup>35</sup>

The crews of the monitors soon found that this would not be another easy victory. Not only were Fort Sumter and the other Confederate batterries well-armed, they were also well-manned. The Confederates had been preparing for this attack for over a year, and that preparation showed in the accuracy of their fire. The ships were hit repeatedly, and although the thick gunsmoke which soon spread across the harbor made it difficult to see, they could tell that their own powerful blows on Sumter were having no apparent effect.<sup>36</sup>

From his flagship anchored outside the harbor entrance, DuPont had a difficult time in gauging the progress of the battle. His ships appeared to be stalled near Fort Sumter and the Confederate fire gave no sign of

slacking up. After exchanging fire with the forts for about two hours, DuPont decided that the defenses could not be overcome in the few remaining hours of daylight. He signalled for his ships to withdraw, with the intent of continuing the attack the next day.<sup>37</sup>

Meeting with his captains shortly after the fleet had left the harbor, their reports confirmed what DuPont had believed all along, the ironclads could not defeat the forts, Charleston could not be taken by the Navy alone. Only one ship, *Keokuk*, had been badly damaged (it would sink later that night, her guns being salvaged by the Confederates later on) but four of the remaining seven ships had suffered damage to their turrets or guns which would require repairs before they could fight again. DuPont was convinced that any resumption of the attack could lead to a disaster.<sup>38</sup>

The disaster he was concerned about was the possibility of one or more of the monitors being sunk in the shallow waters of the harbor and then subsequently being raised and repaired by the Confederates. A Confederate monitor would have been a potent, but not a decisive weapon. The poor seaworthiness of those vessels required that they be towed anywhere outside of sheltered waters, meaning that its ability to break the outside blockade would have been limited.

The possible capture of a monitor was a contingency that could have, and should have, been considered earlier. If DuPont was concerned about the possibility earlier he never raised his concerns with Welles or Fox or asked for guidance about what to do in the event of such a loss. His superiors were under no illusions about the difficulty of the attack and expected that some ships would be lost. Welles' diary of April 8th shows that he was expecting some setbacks:

. . . I have confidence he will be successful, yet so much depends on the result I as not without apprehensions. Eventuate as it may, the struggle will probably be severe and bloody. That we shall lose some vessels and some gallant fellows in getting possession of the Rebel city I have no doubt.<sup>39</sup>

Welles' opinions were evidently not communicated clearly to DuPont, who felt that the potential loss of any ironclads was too high a price to pay for the capture of Charleston. Whether or not Welles had considered the possibility of the Confederates raising a sunken monitor is not clear. The Confederate's ability to perform such a feat had already been shown by their raising of the *USS Merrimac* and its conversion into the ironclad *CSS Virginia*.

DuPont's decision to retire with no further attempts to take Charleston was not supported by his ship captains. They were surprised and dismayed that the result of so many months of waiting and preparation was to be so meager. While admitting that each of their ships had sustained some

damage, their combined opinion was that another attempt should be made once repairs were completed.

They were not the only ones surprised by DuPont's decision. During the ironclad's attack General Hunter had held his troops on Folly, Cole's, and Seabrook's Islands "in readiness to follow up the expected naval success." The morning after the attack he was ready to cross Lighthouse Inlet to Morris Island but the cooperation of the Navy "was deemed necessary to insure the success of the movement." The movement was suspended because DuPont had resolved to retire.

The General sent an officer of his staff to represent to the Admiral his readiness to make the movement, the great importance of making it promptly when the enemy was unprepared to dispute it successfully, and to urge him to cooperate actively with the fire of his fleet. But to all of the considerations earnestly and elaborately urged, the Admiral's answer was that he would not fire another shot.<sup>40</sup>

The lack of a unified command structure meant that the more aggressive of the two commander's, Hunter, was crippled by the cautiousness of his counterpart.

The monitors had been outgunned, as was the case at Fort McAllister. During the entire battle, they fired a total of about 140 rounds whereas the Confederate gunners fired over 2200, of which about 440 were hits. The focus of the monitors' attack, Fort Sumter, had been damaged but nothing that wasn't repaired in a few days. If the ships had closed to the point where the obstructions and mines

were laid they would have been exposed to even closer range fire while virtually immobilized. After the war, the Confederate commander at Charleston, General Beauregard, stated that if the monitors had conducted their attacks at night he would have been powerless to stop them.<sup>41</sup> Whether or not that option was ever considered by DuPont is not known, but it probably would not have been feasible since the ironclads could not use compasses. The technology for correcting compasses for use in iron ships had not yet been discovered.<sup>42</sup>

The results of the attack were slow to reach Washington. Within three days fragmentary reports had come in indicating that the ironclads had been repulsed with the loss of the *Keokuk* and *Ironsides*. Neither Welles or Lincoln were greatly disappointed or surprised by the news. Welles wrote that the loss of two ships "is not very discouraging."<sup>43</sup> Both men assumed that it was a temporary setback and that the attack would be resumed shortly.

As second hand information continued to come in to the capitol, it became apparent that DuPont had no intention of continuing the fight. After the expenditure of so much time, material, and propaganda in the effort, the possibility of its being abandoned after only one try was such an anathema to Lincoln that on April 13th he departed from his normal hands-off approach to naval matters and sent preemptory orders directly to DuPont:

Hold your position inside the bar near Charleston, or, if you have left it, return to it and hold it until further orders. Do not allow the enemy to erect new batteries or defenses on Morris Island. If he has begun it, drive him out. I do not herein order you to renew the general attack. That is to depend on your discretion or further orders.<sup>44</sup>

Hoping that DuPont must have some information to explain his action, Lincoln sent another message to both Hunter and DuPont the next day in a little more conciliatory language. More in a tone of encouragement than direction, he reminded them of the importance of the effort in drawing the enemy's attention away from Hooker's impending Chancellorsville campaign. He gave them the option of continuing it along the lines proposed by the Army, reducing the Confederate works by land.

No censure upon you, or either of you is intended; we still hope by cordial and judicious cooperation you can take the batteries on Morris Island and Sullivan's Island and Fort Sumter. But whether you can or not, we wish the demonstration kept up for a time for a collateral and very important object; we wish the attempt to be a real one (though not a desperate one) if it affords any considerable chance of success. But if prosecuted for a demonstration only, this must not be made public, or the whole effect will be lost. Once again before Charleston, do not leave till further orders from here."<sup>45</sup>

The spirit in which this message was received by the two commanders is illuminating. John Hay, Lincoln's personal secretary, was at Hilton Head when the message was received by both men. Hunter, he reports, "was absolutely delighted" and "anxious to go to work again." DuPont on the other hand "seemed in very low spirits about it."<sup>46</sup> On April 16th DuPont wrote to Welles to complain that the tone

of the President's letter was unjustified and that he, DuPont, should be relieved if he no longer had the confidence of the government; Welles was more than receptive to the suggestion.<sup>47</sup>

Welles' reaction to DuPont's withdrawal had been immediate and bitter. His diary from that period is full of invective against DuPont for his caution. Welles regretted that he had not recognized DuPont's weakness earlier and acted upon it. When DuPont's report of the action was received, detailing the damage received by the ironclads, Welles was so suspicious of those facts that he sent a naval engineer down to conduct an independent inspection of the damage. When the inspector reported that none of the damage was sufficient to prevent the ships from passing the forts, Welles was convinced that DuPont had to go:<sup>48</sup>

Welles' diary of April 30th "I fear he can be no longer useful in his present command, and am mortified and vexed that I did not earlier detect his vanity and weakness. They have lost us the opportunity to take Charleston, which a man of more daring energy and who had not a distinguished name to nurse and take care of would have improved . . . . He is prejudiced against the monitor class of vessels, and would attribute his failure to them but it is evident he has no taste for rough, close fighting."<sup>49</sup>

Dissapointment with DuPont was not limited to Washington. Although somewhat resentful of his secondary role in the April attack, Hunter had upheld his part of the plan and had been as shocked as Welles at its premature



termination. The refusal of DuPont to consider any further attempts against Charleston prompted Hunter on May 22nd to write directly to the President in an attempt to get things moving again:

I fear Admiral DuPont distrusts the iron-clads so much that he has resolved to do nothing with them this summer, and I therefore most earnestly beg you to liberate me from those orders to "co-operate with the Navy" which now tie me down to share the admiral's inactivity . . . Liberate me from this order . . . and I will immediately place a column of 10,000 . . . in the heart of Georgia .  
"50

DuPont became the focus of Welles's disappointment and embarrassment over the failure of the attack. Both his correspondence with DuPont and his diary entries reveal a growing antagonism with the Admiral. His diary entry of May 25th is by no means the most bitter:

Am anxious in relation to the South Atlantic Squadron and feel daily the necessity of selecting a new commander. DuPont is determined Charleston shall not be captured by the Navy, and that the Navy shall not attempt it, thinks it dangerous for the vessels to remain in Charleston Harbor, and prefers to occupy his palace ship, the *Wabash*, at Port Royal to roughing it in a smaller vessel off the port . . . All officers under him are becoming affected by his feelings, adopt his tone, think inactivity best, - that the ironclads are mere batteries, not naval vessels, and that outside blockade is the true and only policy.<sup>51</sup>

Welles became convinced that there would be no successes at Charleston with DuPont in command. Once he determined to relieve him he set about looking for a suitable replacement.

His first choice was Rear Admiral Andrew Foote. Foote had gained fame in working with Grant and Sherman on the Western Rivers, particularly against Forts Henry and Donelson, and had a reputation of being able to cooperate with the Army. Welles's even taking that into account was a sign that joint cooperation was becoming increasingly important to Washington. Welles was being strongly lobbied by Rear Admiral John Dahlgren, the Navy's Chief of Ordnance, for the appointment, as well as being pressured by Dahlgren's most influential supporter, Abraham Lincoln. The reason for Dahlgren's popularity with the President was that Lincoln, like Churchill in a later war, was fascinated by the possibilities of new weapons. As a prominent inventor and military scientist, Dahlgren was an object of Lincoln's interest and respect.<sup>52</sup>

Although Welles respected Dahlgren's technical skill, he was convinced that his assignment to shore duty for the previous 13 years made him unqualified for such an important operational command. Welles was willing to let Dahlgren serve as Foote's second in command and sent Fox to him with the offer. Welles' diary entry of May 29th records the response:

Fox returned with an answer that not only was D.{Dahlgren} unwilling to go as second, but that he wished to decline entirely, unless he could have command of both naval and land forces. This precludes further thought of him. I regret it for his own sake... With undoubted talents of a certain kind he has intense selfishness... he is less

devoted to the country than to himself, that he never acts on any principle of self-sacrifice.<sup>53</sup>

At least DuPont initially had the trust of the Secretary and only lost it through his own failings. Dahlgren never had the full confidence of Welles and never would. Foote's sudden death, just prior to taking command, left Welles reluctant to refuse the President twice. Dahlgren assumed command of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron on June 3rd, 1863. DuPont was never again given a command or any other official duty. He spent the remaining two years of his life composing exhaustive defenses of his actions at Charleston, firmly convinced that responsibility for the failure lay anywhere but on him.<sup>54</sup>

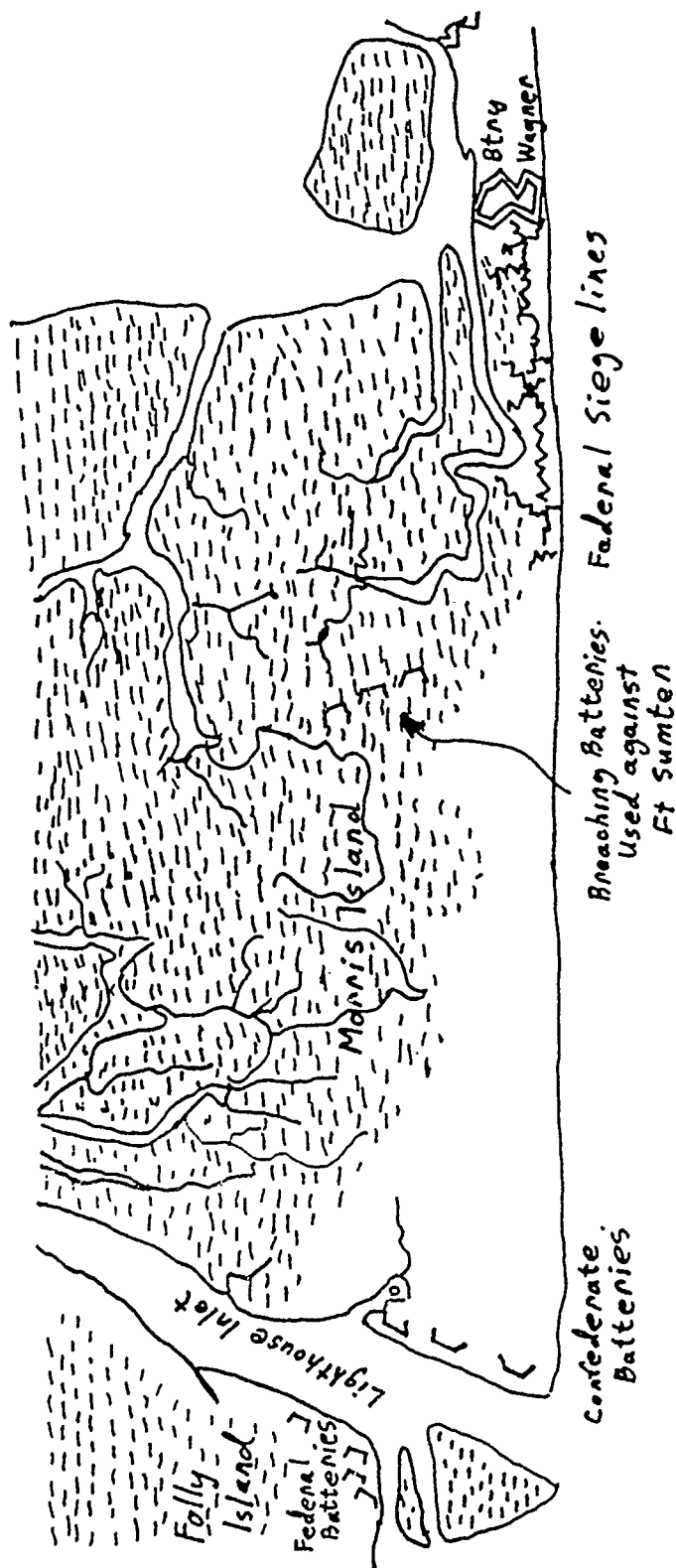
The ironclad's repulse on April 7th ended the Navy's hopes of taking Charleston by itself. The Navy Department had resigned itself to participating in the joint approach advocated by Hunter, only Hunter would not be around to see it through. When the focus shifted to seige operations against the Confederate defenses on Morris Island the War Department wisely decided that an engineer officer with experience in such operations was needed in command. They sent the best they had.

Major General Quincy A. Gillmore had distinguished himself the year before in supervising the installation of siege batterries around Fort Pulaski, near Savannah. Working under incredibly difficult conditions he quickly and covertly installed a formidable array of heavy

artillery in the seemingly bottomless swamps and marshes around the fort. The fort surrendered after a short bombardment with Gilmore earning most of the credit.

Gillmore would need all of his swamp experience. The focus of his operations would be against Morris Island, an island in the loosest sense of the word. Consisting primarily of saw grass and mudflats, much of it disappeared at high tide. What little firm ground there was consisted of a low-lying sand bank along its seaward, eastern edge. Virtually all of the "dry" land was dominated by a series of Confederate fortifications. A series of batteries and rifle pits controlled the access to the southern end of the island, guarding Lighthouse Inlet which separated it from Folly Island. Battery Gregg on Cummings Point, at the island's northern tip was one of the main harbor defense positions and protected Fort Sumter's southern flank. Gregg's own southern flank was protected by the strongest single fort on the island, Battery (or Fort) Wagner. Wagner was built across the narrowest part of the island, and its guns had a clear field of fire against any land force approaching from the south.<sup>55</sup>

Shortly after his appointment to command the Department of the South, Gillmore submitted a "programme of operations" to Major-General H.W. Halleck, the Chief of Staff of the Army. Gillmore's program, which was approved



# Operations Against Morris Island July - Sept 1863

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by both the War and Navy Departments, was the basis of joint operations against Charleston for the remainder of the war. In broad terms it called for (1) the seizure of the south end of Morris Island, (2) the reduction of Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg, (3) demolishing Fort Sumter with artillery fire from Morris Island, (4) removal of the channel obstructions north of Sumter and the subsequent entry of the monitors into the inner harbor, and (5) subsequent joint operations as governed by circumstances.<sup>56</sup>

The summer of 1863 was spent in the slow, methodical work of siege operations. After landing troops on the southern end of Morris Island in early July, the next two months were spent alternating between futile, poorly planned and executed frontal attacks and relapses to the digging of trench lines. The Navy's role in this fighting was limited to taking the seaward faces of the defensive works under fire. The correspondence between Dahlgren and Gillmore reveals a great deal of cooperation, with a lot of effort spent on coordinating the fleet's actions with the Army's assaults.<sup>57</sup> By early September Gillmore had pushed his assault trenches up to the foot of Wagner's parapets. Realizing that further resistance was pointless, the fort was abandoned on September 7th, the night before the final assault was to be made.<sup>58</sup>

The Union victory was a hollow one. Although the capture of Morris Island allowed the Federals to bring Fort

Sumter under direct fire and reduce it to a pile of masonry rubble, it got them no closer to taking Charleston. The Confederates had been working steadily on improving the inner harbor defenses. Even with Morris Island in Federal hands and Fort Sumter neutralized there was still more than enough guns around the remaining perimeter of Charleston Harbor to deny entrance to any fleet. The seige and capture of James Island would require many months and far more troops than Gillmore had, more troops than he had any hope of getting. Grant's impending campaign against Lee's army would have first priority on men.

The sudden evacuation of Battery Wagner caught the Federal commanders off guard. Both Dahlgren and Gillmore, independently, and with only minimal consultation decided to take advantage of their momentum and attempt to seize the ruins of Fort Sumter. When Dahlgren requested the use of Army assault boats on the 8th for an assault on Sumter that night, he was surprised by Gillmore's reply that he had none to spare since he too was planning his own assault for that same night. Their exchange of letters on that date reveals how little importance was given to conducting a joint operation:

Dahlgren to Gillmore, 2:30 PM: I am going to assault Fort Sumter to-night.

Gillmore to Dahlgren, 6:55 PM: Your dispatch, by signal, stating that you intended to assault Sumter to-night, was received by me an hour

after I had dispatched my letter by one of my aides informing you that I intended the same thing. There should be but one commander in an operation of this kind, to insure success and prevent mistakes. I have designated two small regiments. Will your part join with them, the whole to be under command of the senior officer, or will the parties confer together and act in concert? The former method is much the best. What do you say?

Dahlgren to Gillmore, 7:10 PM: I have assembled 500 men, and I cannot consent to let the commander be other than a naval officer. Will you be kind enough to tell me what time you move, and what will be the watchword to prevent collision? The rank of my commanding officer will be lieutenant-colonel, but if it will be of service in avoiding any question of rank, I will send one of the rank of colonel who has done the duty of commodore, the equal of brigadier-general.

Gillmore to Dahlgren, (no time indicated): You decline to act in concert with me or allow the senior officer to command the assault on Sumter, but insist that a naval officer must command the party. Why this should be so in assaulting a fortification, I cannot see. I am so fearful that some accident will take place between our parties that I would recall my own if it were not too late. I sent you the watchword by special messenger, who has returned. We must trust to chance and hope for the best. No matter who gets the fort, if we place our flag over it.<sup>59</sup>

The attack failed miserably. All chance for surprise was lost when the assault boats were assembled near the fort hours before they were ready to attack. The assault landing was poorly executed, with the officers having no clear idea of what they were supposed to do.<sup>60</sup> The few sailors and marines who made it ashore on the fort landed directly beneath its walls with no means to scale them. After a short fight, and many casualties from firing on each other in the confusion, the Federal troops withdrew with a loss of 130 killed, wounded, or captured.<sup>61</sup> When the



Army saw what was awaiting them, they prudently cancelled their own attack.

Why this sudden failure to cooperate by two commanders who had worked closely together for over two months, who both understood the value of combined effort, and who had, until then, been free of the petty rivalry that had plagued so many other operations? The answer probably lies in the objective itself. South Carolina, and Charleston in particular, aroused passionate hatred among the Federals, but Fort Sumter with its overpowering symbolic value was a prize whose capture was worth more than any feelings of cooperation or even common sense. If resentment and unhealthy competition was the price of taking Sumter for the Army or the Navy, then both were willing to pay that price. Both Dahlgren and Gillmore knew that only one name would be associated with the glorious feat, and each wanted that name to be his own, or at least that of his service.

After the failure of the attempts to seize Sumter, the focus of the Federal commanders shifted from the Confederates to each other. From September 9th onward, the tone of the correspondence between the joint commanders shifts from one of cooperation to contention. Every request for cooperation was answered by the other with polite disdain, lengthy defenses of their own past actions, and claims that any delay is due to the other commander.<sup>62</sup>

The Navy continued to delay another attempt to enter the harbor, claiming more monitors were needed to ensure success. Joint operations during this time were limited to a huge and unnecessary bombardment of Sumter in mid-October. Its guns having all been moved to other works, the fort posed no threat, other than to the dignity of the Federal forces. Dahlgren, as DuPont before him, feared the loss of a monitor in the harbor where it could be raised by the enemy. As September passed, then October, then November, the War Department began looking at the troops in Charleston as a source of replacements for the Army of the Potomac, then hemorrhaging men before Petersburg.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile the Confederates continued to strengthen the inner harbor defenses. With the repeated delays by the Navy, Gillmore was convinced that the opportunity of September had been lost and that the enemy could increase his defenses faster than the Navy could build monitors. By late December Gillmore, despairing that the Navy would never be ready, was asking for more troops and permission to start offensive operations near Savannah. Receiving permission but no troops, Gilmore was frustrated at every turn. There would be no further significant offensive operations against Charleston.<sup>64</sup>

The Charleston campaign was the low point in joint operations along the East Coast. Initiated for several good reasons; it would help tighten the blockade, it would

draw Confederate attention and effort away from the Army of the Potomac, and it would be a big symbolic victory. Unfortunately these valid reasons were overtaken and superseded by a very poor one; it would allow the Navy to emerge out from under the shadow of the Army, and gain a larger share of the public's esteem. This spirit of competition at the price of cooperation drove the Navy's decision to attack on its own. The impetus for it came from above the level of the on-scene commanders who had managed to establish an effective, if not cordial, working relationship.

The responsibility for the second major breakdown in cooperation, the abortive attack on Fort Sumter, lies squarely with the commanders themselves. Their hunger for the glory associated with the capture of the fort led them to openly refuse to cooperate in any meaningful way. In the absence of a unified command, it should be expected that human weaknesses such as rivalry, ambition, and jealousy may surface.

After two years of intermittent but costly effort, Charleston relapsed into a backwater of the Federal war effort. It never would fall to the joint Federal forces that had spent virtually the entire war on its doorstep. It was not until Sherman's march through the interior of South Carolina in the spring of 1865 that Charleston was evacuated.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Catton Never Call Retreat (New York: Washington Square Press, 1965), 217.

<sup>2</sup> The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington:GPO, 1898), 1st ser., VI, 89-90 (hereafter cited as ORA).

<sup>3</sup> H.A. DuPont Rear Admiral Samuel Francis DuPont (New York: Natl. Americana Soc., 1926), 182-3.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, Siege of Charleston, 115-6.

<sup>5</sup> Catton Retreat, 121.

<sup>6</sup> Robert M. Thompson (ed.) The Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox 1861-1865 (New York: Naval Historical Soc., 1918), 149.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel F. DuPont Official Dispatches and Letters of RADM S.F. DuPont (Wilmington: Press of Ferris Bros., 1883), see from pg 202 onwards.

<sup>8</sup> Jones Siege of Charleston, 143.

<sup>9</sup> Jones Siege of Charleston, 144.

<sup>10</sup> Richard S. West Mr. Lincoln's Navy (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1957), 227.

<sup>11</sup> Catton Retreat, 121.

<sup>12</sup> Catton Retreat, 121.

<sup>13</sup> Catton Retreat, 121.

<sup>14</sup> West Lincoln's Navy, 233.

<sup>15</sup> West, Lincoln's Navy, 266.

<sup>16</sup> DuPont S.F. DuPont, 151-2.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson Fox, 119-20.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson Fox, 120.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson Fox, 126-7.

<sup>20</sup> Rowena Reed Combined Operations in the Civil War (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1978), xxi, and a8 West Lincoln's Navy, 266.

<sup>21</sup>Bruce Catton Never Call Retreat (New York: Washington Square Press, 1965), 118.

<sup>22</sup>Thompson Fox, 179-80.

<sup>23</sup>Thompson Fox, 131-2.

<sup>24</sup>Catton Retreat, 120.

<sup>25</sup>Catton Retreat, 120, and Jones Siege of Charleston, 145-50.

<sup>26</sup>Catton Retreat, 120.

<sup>27</sup>Jones Siege of Charleston, 166, and West Lincoln's Navy, 232.

<sup>28</sup>Archives, pg 48, ltr 37/68.

<sup>29</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 231.

<sup>30</sup>Howard K. Beale (ed.) The Diary of Gideon Welles, vol 1, ( New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1960) 247.

<sup>31</sup>Beale Welles, 265

<sup>32</sup>Catton Retreat, 118.

<sup>33</sup>Catton Retreat, 121.

<sup>34</sup>Catton Retreat, 122.

<sup>35</sup>Catton Retreat, 122-3.

<sup>36</sup>Catton Retreat, 124.

<sup>37</sup>DuPont S.F. DuPont, 213.

<sup>38</sup>DuPont S.F. DuPont, 213-4.

<sup>39</sup>Beale Welles, 264.

<sup>40</sup>Jones Siege of Charleston, 188-9.

<sup>41</sup>(no author) Annals of the War (Philadelphia: Times Pub. Co., 1879), 526.

<sup>42</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 233.

<sup>43</sup>Beale Welles, 264

<sup>44</sup>Jones Siege of Charleston, 184.

<sup>45</sup>Roy P. Basler (ed.) The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 6, (New Brunswick NY:Rutgers Univ. Press, 1953), 173-4.

<sup>46</sup>Basler Lincoln, 174.

<sup>47</sup>Basler Lincoln, 174.

<sup>48</sup>Catton Retreat, 126.

<sup>49</sup>Beale Welles, 288

<sup>50</sup>ORA, ser I, Vol XIV, 455-57.

<sup>51</sup>Beale Welles, 311.

<sup>52</sup>Beale Welles, 317.

<sup>53</sup>Beale Welles, 317-8.1

<sup>54</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy, 239.

<sup>55</sup>Catton Retreat, 208-9.

<sup>56</sup>ORA, ser I, vol XXVIII, 105.

<sup>57</sup>ORA, ser I, vol. XXVIII, 24-85.

<sup>58</sup>West, Lincoln's Navy , 239.

<sup>59</sup>ORA, ser I, vol XXVIII, 87-9.

<sup>60</sup>Clarence E. Macartney Mr. Lincoln's Admirals (New York; Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1956), 159-60.

<sup>61</sup>West Lincoln's Navy, 240.

<sup>62</sup>ORA, ser I, Vol XXVIII, 97-107

<sup>63</sup>Catton Retreat, 214-5.

<sup>64</sup>ORA, ser I vol XXVIII, 103-35.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS

The successes or failures of the three joint operations examined in this paper were determined by several factors. These factors lend themselves into division of those which facilitated joint cooperation, those which hindered it, and those which could do either, depending on the situation.

One of the most striking aspects of the records of the early joint operations is the apparent lack of institutional competition between the Army and the Navy. While this enviable state of affairs would not survive the war, it nonetheless was a significant factor in allowing joint operations to succeed as well as they did. The most likely reasons for this lack of competition are traceable both to antebellum conditions and the nature of the war itself.

Both services entered the war without a tradition or history of significant wartime inter-service rivalry. This

was due to the separate and distinct missions of the services in the early 19th century. Neither service had a real capability for encroaching on the other's primary, and only mission (i.e., land or sea warfare). This clear deliniation of roles, and the clear division of the Army and Navy apparent in the separate - and equal - cabinet-level positions of the War and Navy Departments, precluded any significant competition for budgets. The Congressional funding of each service waxed and waned independent of the other, in response to perceived threats or additional missions.

The predisposition of the services not to compete, if not cooperate, carried over into the early phases of the war. This is understandable given the enormous challenges facing both services. As previously discussed, both the Army and the Navy were totally unprepared to fight a war of the magnitude of the one thrown upon them in 1861. The demands on both services to rapidly expand and quickly initiate offensive operations left neither of them with the time or desire to compete with the other for additional responsibilities or taskings. This was taken to the extreme in the case of the Navy's avoiding any responsibility for the afloat transport of Army troops, leaving the War Department to find and control its own transport fleet.



The influx of short-service volunteers into the officer ranks of both services, but especially the Army, also had an effect on interservice cooperation. Volunteer officers were less likely than long-service Regulars to dwell on matters of precedence and seniority, and were not as concerned about the long-term reputations of their respective services. While the ambition of such volunteers as Generals Butler and Hunter could be a significant source of friction with the Navy, their ambition was for their own personal and political fame, not the Army's. Although this undoubtedly made them no more pleasant to work with, it would be less likely to generate resentment of the Army in general, and would be more likely to dissipate with their transfer or relief.

At the war's outset the selection of commanders of the joint expeditions followed the prewar practice of strict adherence to seniority. Chosen for his professional competence rather than his seniority, DuPont's selection as the commander of the naval component of the Port Royal Expedition marked the first departure from this practice. An even more significant step was taken a few months later when an officer, Flag-Officer Goldsborough, was bypassed for command of the New Orleans expedition specifically because of his inability to work with the Army.<sup>1</sup> The officer ultimately selected to fill that position, Flag-Officer Farragut, went on to establish an excellent working

relationship with all of his Army counterparts. The belated realization on the part of the service Secretaries that joint operations required special talents would slowly improve the performance of both services in those operations.

Pressure on commanders from their seniors to cooperate with their counterparts was slow to develop but helpful when it became more routine. The Lincoln Administration found press accounts about rumored interservice rivalry during the Hatteras Expedition embarrassing. The next joint operation to Port Royal sailed with explicit instructions to both commanders that they were expected to cooperate fully with each other and that they would be held accountable for failure to do so. One of the major factors leading to the failure of the Charleston Campaign was not only the absence of any such pressure on the commanders but in the case of the Navy, positive encouragement to avoid cooperation.

One factor which tended to be more prominent in the smaller, more routine joint operations was the lack of rivalry between the subordinate commanders. The joint operations conducted along the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida from the capture of Port Royal until well into the Charleston Campaign were models of teamwork and cooperation. This excellent relationship may have been due to the effort spent on fostering it by both DuPont and

Sherman. Nonetheless, once in place it seemed to be self-perpetuating and precluded many of the seemingly minor disputes between subordinates which often flair into large confrontations. The only time that friction surfaced between the more junior officers was during prolonged periods of inactivity. That such problems did arise is understandable in light of the harsh climate and primitive living conditions for both services in that theater.

The final factor which facilitated cooperation was the the great degree of latitude granted to joint expedition commanders in their mission orders. The freedom to choose the ojectives, and even the destination of their expedition, gave the commanders of the Port Royal Expedition the flexibility to accommodate the desires and concerns of both commanders, to their mutual satisfaction. Such freedom of action was vital to the success of joint operations that had a divided command structure from top to bottom.

A factor which was present in all joint operations, at all levels of command of both services, from the war's start to its finish was the total lack of unity of command. This characteristic was present in the separate but equal status of the services secretaries, both of whom reported directly to the President, and in the command organization for the joint operations, two separate and distinct commanders. The repeated failure to follow up on

opportunities and the endemic delays associated with joint operations were largely due to this single factor. It appears that efficiency and improving the likelihood of victory always took second place to maintaining the independence and prerogatives of each service. The Navy's unwillingness to assume responsibility for the waterborne transportation of Army troops for the Fort Sumter expedition, as well as subsequent operations, is an outgrowth of this insistence on avoiding the precedent-setting subordination of one service to the other.

Closely related to the issue of lack of unity of command was the fact that cooperation was not normal in rigid hierarchies such as the military. The problem was not limited to joint operations. Within each service the Bureau system had proven to be grossly inefficient, with the bureau chiefs jealously guarding their prerogatives, rarely cooperating with the colleagues except under pressure from the service secretariats. The rank structures of both services, even to the present day, ensure that no two officers are exactly equal in rank. Even within a particular paygrade seniority is determined for every officer by his date of rank. This was, and is, done to ensure that the senior officer in any situation can lawfully take charge. To expect that officers from different services would cooperate as equals after having

been conditioned their entire careers to either give or take orders should have been seen as unreasonable.

The differing command structures of the two services was an obstacle to effective planning. The Navy lacked the Army equivalent of general in chief, albiet an office which was only periodically filled. There was never one man in the Navy clearly charged with operational or strategic planning. A civilian Secretary of the Navy could never have the credibility of a professional soldier in a joint planning situation, and so consequently what planning there was, was carried out independently by both services with only a minimum of coordination. The lack of permanent service staffs in both services compounded the problem by forcing coordination up to the secretarial level, thereby making political considerations more prominent than they otherwise might have been.

The joint operations conducted along the Eastern seaboard were assigned different levels of priority by each service. The Navy considered them as contributing to their primary mission of enforcing the blockade. Since enforcement of the blockade was a Navy, not an Army, priority the coastal joint operations were viewed as a secondary theater by the Army. Because the Army considered the coastal operations to be of secondary importance, they were always resource constrained for men, materials, and attention. A direct result of these shortfalls was the

failure to exploit victories, at least in those instances when the commanders were conscious of the opportunities before them.

Another aspect of the problems associated with the differing perceptions as to the relative importance of the operations, was the War Department's frequent use of the Army forces involved in coastal operations as a replacement pool of men for other, more prominent theaters of the war. This is symptomatic of the lack of overall strategic planning on the national level. This lack of direction led to shifting priorities with joint operations usually suffering from transfers of troops. The lack of long range planning is also evident in the limited objectives assigned to joint operations, objectives more limited than were possible even with their limited resources. When the potential for exploitation became evident, the opportunities were usually lost to Confederate countermeasures.

Although the orders to the commanders of the Port Royal Expedition specifically enjoined them to promote cooperation, and that they would be held accountable for failure to do so, it proved to be a hollow threat. Throughout the war, the failure of a commander to cooperate with his counterpart would not be, in and of itself, grounds for relief from command. This failure to hold commanders accountable for failure to cooperate,

contributed to an operating environment where joint cooperation could be discarded at will in order to attempt single-service *coup de main*, usually in a bid to gain publicity or the lion's share of the credit for a victory.

Just such a desire to avoid sharing the stage with the Army led the Navy to waste lives and resources in a vain attempt to seize Charleston by itself. Competition for credit is a human failing that can be expected to surface in any organization. Usually such impulses arise from personal ambition, but in the Navy's case it briefly became almost institutional. This collective failure to recognize the advantages of a joint operation evolved to the point where "beating the Army," in Assistant Secretary Fox's words, became an end in and of itself.

The lack of adequate prewar training made the transition from peace to war exceptionally difficult for both services. Their tiny antebellum size, their dispersal in small units in scattered posts and cruising stations, and the complacency about ever having to fight a war rather than perform constabulary duties combined to make the "learning curve" very steep for the services. Inexperience with commanding large forces, and unfamiliarity with the capabilities and limitations of their sister service, made most of the commanders of joint operations poorly equipped to think boldly or understand the inherent power and potential uses of joint forces.

The frequent lack of advance planning, both on the joint and intraservice levels, produced mixed results. It caused a great deal of inefficiency, and contributed to lost opportunities for exploitation, but at the same time it, like the vague mission orders given to the commanders, allowed them a certain degree of flexibility. In the absence of clear command relationships and unified command, flexibility in carrying out operations can become indispensable to fostering cooperation between services. This is not to suggest that planning is detrimental, but in the unique circumstances of the Civil War the lack of planning did have a beneficial result on cooperation, even at the cost of efficiency or even mission accomplishment.

Additional flexibility was obtained from the lack of doctrine on joint operations. The lack of doctrine is attributable to a lack of previous experience, a lack of any institutional structure to create it, and doubts that a need for such doctrine, like meaningful training, would ever be necessary. As in the failure to plan, this lack of doctrine is not held up as a condition that should be imitated, rather it is just one more factor that should be considered when examining joint operations of the period.

Willingness to cooperate was a perishable condition, unable to survive battlefield setbacks. When faced with failures such as Fort Sumter Relief Expedition, the ironclad attack on Charleston, or the independent assaults



on Fort Sumter, joint cooperation was an early casualty. Blame for failures was routinely attributed to the other service. Failure in joint operations became self-perpetuating, and could only be reversed by the relief of one or both of the commanders involved. Success on the other hand, could help ease minor interservice frictions and lead to mutual congratulations as in the operations following the capture of Port Royal. Success could correct minor failures of cooperation, defeat exacerbated them.

The personalities of the commanders became decisive in all cases. Despite the many factors and influences that worked against cooperation, the bottom line was that if both commanders were committed to maintaining an effective working relationship then joint cooperation was unstoppable. Personalities were so important because they largely determined the nature of the relationship between the commanders. Mutual trust and respect were vital to a successful relationship, personal affability much less so. The "come as you are" nature of the Fort Sumter Relief Expedition did not allow the commanders involved adequate time to build a minimum level of trust, a precondition to taking advantage of the vagueness of their orders, or making a liberal interpretation of them as DuPont and Sherman did at Port Royal.

The relationship between the commanders of the Port Royal and Charleston campaigns was a significant factor in

the ultimate success or failure of those operations. Although DuPont initially doubted Sherman's competence, he grew to trust him and they developed a close working relationship. Sherman's replacement, Hunter, was not willing to accomodate DuPont's need for deference, thus friction arose, - friction that inhibited the development of trust. That friction was aggravated by what amounted to a personality change in DuPont as he began to lose his aggressive spirit, and became content with the status quo. The end result was almost a complete breakdown in cooperation. That rift was temporarily repaired with DuPont's relief by Dahlgren. Once again the relationship between the commanders was undermined by the strain of the failure to capture Fort Sumter, causing another breakdown between Dahlgren and Hunter's replacement, Gilmore.

In summary, in the absence of a unified command structure the factors which tend to hinder joint cooperation greatly outweigh those which tend to facilitate it. In that situation the decisive factor was the personalities of the commanders involved. If their primary motivation was accomplishment of the mission, and they were willing to subordinate all other personal and service considerations to that overriding goal then joint cooperation would not be a factor in the success or failure of their mission. If, on the other hand, one or both of the joint commanders was anything less than totally

committed to accomplishing their mission then the probability of the hindering factors becoming dominant was almost inevitable.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Rowena Reed Combined Operations in the Civil War  
(Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), xv.

## APPENDIX ONE

## APPENDIX ONE

Instructions from the Secretary of the Navy to Flag-Officer DuPont, U.S. Navy, regarding cooperative measures for the occupation of certain important points on the Southern coast. From: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. (Govt Printing Office: Washington, 1901) series 1, Vol XII, 215-15.

(italics added)

NAVY DEPARTMENT, October 12, 1861.

SIR: In order to suppress the present insurrection and maintain our Union and nationality, the Government can not delay vigorous and effective measures upon our Southern coast. By the proclamation of the President, on the 19th of April, a blockade has been declared, and commercial intercourse with the region of the country that is in insurrection interdicted. In order to carry into effect the measures of the Government which are persistently sought to be evaded, and to extinguish the rebellion, it is necessary to take possession of certain important points upon our Southern coast where our squadrons may find shelter and have a depot, and from which the loyal citizens of those quarters may be protected.

In examining the various points upon the coast, it has been ascertained that Bull's Bay, St. Helena, Port Royal, and Fernandina are each and all accessible and desirable points for the purposes indicated, and the Government had decided to take possession of at least two of them. *Which of the two shall be thus occupied will be committed to your discretion*, after obtaining the best information you can in regard to them. Much must necessarily be left to the combined wisdom and judgment of yourself and the general in command after you shall have obtained the facts and details.

The long and elaborate investigation which you have given the subject during the summer and fall as a member of the board selected for that especial object, enables you, with the free communication you have had with the Department, to bring to the subject a very thorough knowledge of the whole details and purposes of the Government.

The men and means embarked in this expedition are of such magnitude that the country has reason to expect therefrom great and gratifying results. It is believed that no more effective blows can be inflicted upon those who are

engaged in this causeless and unnatural rebellion than by naval expeditions and demonstrations on the coast.

Great power is necessarily intrusted to you, and with it great confidence in your discretion, courage and ability to guide and direct the energies of the brave and loyal men who gladly peril their lives under your lead to vindicate the nationality of the flag, sustain the integrity of the Union, maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and enforce the execution of the laws. On your well directed efforts and those of your associates will depend in a great degree the speedy and successful termination of this unhappy contest.

It is proper that I should enjoin upon you to improve every favorable opportunity to cultivate friendly feelings with the people, and induce them to return to their duty and their allegiance. Impress upon them the desire of the Government and their fellow-citizens for a return of those peaceful relations which once existed, and which ought never to have been interrupted. Your acts and words, on all occasions, you will make correspond with these declarations.

The military force, which under the direction of the Secretary of War, accompanies the naval expedition, will cooperate with you for the purpose of taking possession of and holding, as stated, at least two of the places that have been enumerated, and in concert with you, taking other measures for maintaining the national authority and enforcing the execution of the laws.

By a recent order of the, President, a copy of which has been forwarded to you, flag-officers rank as major-general; but *no officer of the Army or Navy, whatever maybe his rank, can assume any direct command, independent of consent, over an officer of the other service, excepting only when land forces are expressly embarked in vessels of war to do the duty of marines.*

*The President expects and requires, however, the most cordial and effectual cooperation between the officers of the two services in taking possession of and holding the posts and positions on our Southern coast which are designated in these instructions, and will hold any commander of either branch to a strict responsibility for any failure to procure harmony and secure the objects proposed.*

I am, very respectfully, etc.,

GIDEON WELLES.

APPENDIX TWO



## APPENDIX TWO

Instructions to Brigadier-General T.W. Sherman, U.S. Army, from General W.S. Scott and the War Department regarding the Port Royal Expedition. From: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. Series I, Vol XII (Government Printing Office: Washington, 1901.), 220.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY  
Washington, October 14,  
1861

Sir: You have been selected to command the land portion of a joint expedition with a naval squadron, and selected on account of its importance.

A short letter of general instructions you have already received from the War Department, and are fully impressed with the principal objects of the expedition. Wishing to leave you a wide margin of discretion, I have but little to add, and that little relates to the principles which govern cooperation in joint expeditions.

No land officer can be subjected, in strictness, to the orders of any sea officer unless placed on ship to serve as a marine, and no sea officer under the orders of a land officer unless placed on some fortifications to assist in its defense, or before it to assist in its capture. But land troops embarked in vessels of war for transportation merely, will be considered, in respect to naval commanders, as passengers, subject, of course to the internal regulations of the vessels.

Cordiality and deference on the part of our land forces toward those of our Navy, in the joint service in question, need scarcely be enjoined. Hearty reciprocity can not fail to be the result. To this end free and frequent conferences between the joint commanders are recommended. Accordingly the President, Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, requires and expects the most effective and cordial cooperation between the commanders of the expedition, their officers, and men, and will hold all, in proportion to rank, to a strict and severe responsibility for any failure to preserve harmony and to secure all the objects of the joint expedition.

With full confidence in your zeal and ability,  
I remain, with great respect, yours, truly,

WINFIELD SCOTT

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